

NVMMEN

INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

ISSUED BY THE

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

VOLUME XXIV



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1977

CONTENTS

CATHERINE L. ALBANESE, The Multi-Dimensional Mandala. A Study in the Interiorization of Sacred Space	I
FREDERICK MATHEWSON DENNY, Some Religio-Communal Terms and Concepts in the Qurʾān	26
HANS-PETER HASENFRATZ, Der moderne nordamerikanische Totenkult als religionsgeschichtliches Problem	60
WILLIAM A. CHRISTIAN Jr., The Spanish Shrine	72
Addition to article on " <i>Religionswissenschaft</i> in Continental Europe" (<i>Numen</i> , XXIII, 3, Dec. 1976)	79
Publications received	79
MME M. V. DAVID, Les idées du 18e siècle sur l'idolâtrie, et les audaces de David Hume et du président de Brosses	81
HENRY A. GREEN, Gnosis and Gnosticism: A study in meth- odology	95
R. P. CARROLL, Ancient Israelite prophecy and dissonance theory	135
CARL OLSON, The existential, social, and cosmic significance of the Upanayana rite	151
Editorial	161
NOBLE ROSS REAT, <i>Karma</i> and rebirth in the <i>Upaniṣads</i> and Buddhism	163
MARIA VITTORIA CERUTTI, Ptaħil e ruha: una fenomenologia del dualismo mandeo	186
PAUL O. INGRAM, Nichirin's three secrets	207
KAREL WERNER, Symbolism in the Vedas and its conceptuali- sation	223
Publications received	241

NVMEN

Copyright 1977 by E. J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or
translated in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche
or any other means without written permission from the publisher

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MANDALA

A Study in the Interiorization of Sacred Space *)

BY

CATHERINE L. ALBANESE

Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A.

I first became acquainted with mandalas in the writings of C. G. Jung, particularly in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.¹⁾ Here Jung uses the term to refer to the small circular images which both he and his patients drew in the process of growth toward psychic wholeness. He uses the term too for the circular motifs which erupted in their dream-consciousness. So for Jung the "magic circle" became an archetypal symbol of a progression toward psychic wholeness. In short, the mandala meant a circle which "signifies the *wholeness of the self*."²⁾

A word is in order about the general background of Jung's thought which led to his evocation of this concept. Jung's interest in the Eastern form derives from his process of developing a psychoanalytic theory of individuation. Briefly, the Jungian theory posits a general methodological principle of opposites: the conscious and the unconscious mind. Energy or libido is produced on a gradient between the poles as the repressed contents of the unconscious are brought to consciousness. Mental health means achieving a proper and harmonious balance, a right gradient, between the poles. Thus, Jung's concern is not with instincts such as hunger, aggression, or sex, but with what he considers the motivating force behind these instincts. And of the two poles which balance the energy, his primary fascination is for the unconscious.

*) I wish to thank Professor Frank Reynolds of the University of Chicago for his bibliographic suggestions which aided me extensively in researching this study.

For the explanation of various concepts see the glossary of terms at the end.

1) C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

2) *Ibid.*, p. 335.

For Jung, the unconscious constitutes the unknown in the inner world. Two layers compose it: there is a first layer, or personal unconscious, comprising repressed or forgotten content from the individual's specific life experience. Then there is a second and impersonal or transpersonal layer. Jung terms this layer the collective unconscious and finds in it "primordial images" which are ancient and universal thought-forms of humanity.³⁾ He names these thought-forms or image-symbols archetypes from the Greek *tupos*, a "blow" or "imprint." It is in these archetypes that the unconscious becomes available to the conscious mind. Because of the collective structure of the human psyche, these archetypes reveal a basic similarity in different cultures, times, individuals. The whole question of cultural influence is bracketed in the Jungian approach. Archetypes are "archaic psychic components which have entered the individual psyche without any direct line of tradition."⁴⁾ Because of the archetypes, men will produce again and again basically similar mythical ideas. Ghosts, wizards, witches, demons, angels—and mandalas are all cases in point.

The individuation process—which is the Jungian version of the psychoanalytic procedure and a growth toward mental and emotional wholeness—involves for Jung a step-by-step coming to terms with the archetypes in an established progression. First comes a confrontation with the shadow, the symbolization of the evil or dark side of human nature. As an attribute of the collective unconscious, the shadow is absolute evil, but it assumes relative terms too as proper to the personal unconscious. The shadow is transcendent but also individual.

At this point two other archetypes are differentiated: the anima for man and the corresponding animus for woman; internalized femininity for the male and masculinity for the female. The internalization is projected on representatives of the opposite sex, often with unhappy results in terms of honest, clear-cut and open personal relationships. The illusion in projection and transference must thus be realized in a process of coming to terms with anima or animus.

Freed from infantile projections and transferences, the person next confronts the Scylla and Charybdis of positive and negative inflation,

3) C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. Hull (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 76.

4) C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 23.

products of the so-called mana personality. Here the energy released from anima and animus either reforms itself as the all-knowing magician or Cybele or else grovels in an abject 'I-am-a-worm-and-no-man' before an objectified mana-personality, an absolute Heavenly Father who possesses all value.⁵⁾

At this juncture, if the bubble can be burst and the inflation deflated, the active imagination is free to engage in the transcendent function. This culmination of the entire process is the realization of personality in all its aspects, in its original wholeness. And this is symbolized in the inclusive archetype of the self, represented as a mandala. Jung's own dream of the city of Liverpool is an example of how the mandala functions as the archetype of the self. It was nighttime, dark and rainy. Jung found himself in a broad square in the city. A round pool lay at the center of the square with a small sunlit isle in its middle. On the island grew a single magnolia tree with reddish blossoms. For Jung:

This dream brought with it a sense of finality. I saw that here the goal had been revealed. One could not go beyond the center. The center is the goal, and everything is directed toward that center. Through this dream I understood that the self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning.⁶⁾

The individual and the collective then—and their tension as opposites producing an energy which runs along a gradient to the unconscious—leads to the goal of finding oneself. And the goal is symbolized in the mandala, an internal product of the psyche. It is a totally interiorized symbol in which good and evil become one in the center which is the self.

In using the term "mandala" to describe the circle which Jung saw as the archetype of the self, he was drawing on an Eastern concept and an Eastern tradition. As Jung discovered the concept, he understood it particularly as an expression of the psychic phenomenon he was charting. For him, Eastern mandalas and Western circles were one and the same. " 'Mandala' means a circle, more especially a magic circle, and this symbol is not only to be found all through the East but also among us; mandalas are amply represented in the Middle

5) C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, p. 248.

6) C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 199.

Ages.”⁷⁾ He goes on to talk of mandalas among the Egyptians, in the works of Boehme, among the Navaho Indians. The most beautiful mandalas of all, he claims, come from Tibetan Buddhism. But finally, he speaks of what concerns him most intimately: “mandala” drawings of the mentally ill and of his patients.

Still more, Jung is possessed of a curious kind of double vision in viewing the mandalas of the East: that is, he sees and at the same time he doesn't see them in their contextual dimension. So at one point he talks about the mandala as the Indian term for a circle drawn in a religious ritual. “In Tibetan Buddhism,” he says, “the figure has the significance of a ritual instrument (yantra), whose purpose is to assist meditation and concentration.”⁸⁾ He sees that the Lamaic mandala (the Vajramandala)) contains the square ground plan of a stupa: “We can see from the mandalas constructed in solid form that it is really the plan of a *building*. The square also conveys the idea of a house or temple, of an inner walled-in space.”⁹⁾ Yet Jung finds no particular significance in these observations, and he never raises the question of whether or not the ritual aspect of the Eastern magic circle makes some distinctions from the Western counterpart advisable. His sights are simply set elsewhere—on the psychological implications of the Eastern phenomenon which appear to be of the same order as the Western circles of twentieth century dreamers. With the overarching category of the archetype, the similarity—in fact, identity—of the two has a ready explanation. And Jung, as psychiatrist and cartographer of the mind, is content.

The Jungian concept of the mandala has proved fruitful and rewarding in the therapeutic situation. More, it has enriched our understanding of myth and symbol. Yet, as is submitted, the very brilliance of the Jungian discovery and the overriding importance of what he did advert to and did see may obscure another dimension of the

7) C. G. Jung, comm. and Richard Wilhelm, trans., *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), p. 99.

8) C. G. Jung, “Concerning Mandala Symbolism,” *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Vol. IV, Part 1 of the *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 387.

9) C. G. Jung, “The Symbolism of the Mandala,” *Psychology and Alchemy*, Vol. XII of the *Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 126.

Eastern mandala as it functioned in Buddhist religious practice: that is, its social and communal dimension. "It seems to me beyond question," Jung wrote in one study on the symbolism of the mandala, "that these Eastern symbols originated in dreams and visions, and were not invented by some Mahayana church father."¹⁰) Jung seems to overlook a vast excluded middle in this statement, a middle comprised of monument and myth and evolving ritual which however much it had originally been the projection of somebody's dream or vision still passed via the media of external historical and social concretization back into the psychological realm. Further, the concretization seems to be traceable in large measure to the sacral kingship or cakravartin ideal. What I am saying is that perhaps Jung was right in recognizing the psychological dimension of the mandala but wrong in the completeness of the identification he made between the European spherical drawings of his patients and their Eastern equivalents. He was wrong, not because there was no analogy, but because he mistook analogy for identity. He saw one stage in a process and noted a similarity with a further stage in that process as represented by his patients. The uniqueness of historical event seems to have been swallowed up in the archetype.

The middle area between India and China provides a vast arena for a study of the diffusion of Buddhist Indian themes in various stages of development. Here the hypothesis can be tested by an excursion into the world of Buddhist monument, statuary, mandala and ritual, particularly in its Tantric phase. Stupa, funerary monument, temple and royal palace, all in some manner reflect the "magic circle." Running through all is the theme of sacral kingship, the cakravartin motif.

There are for instance the Cambodian archaeological remains described by George Coedès.¹¹) The ancient Khmers, Coedès maintains, had attached a sacral quality to kingship. This explains the origin of their most typical architecture: a pyramid of steps crowned by a single sanctuary or by five towers.

But the study of the Cambodian shrines centers on the group of

10) *Ibid.*, p. 96.

11) George Coedès, "Le Culte de la Royauté Divinisée, Source d'Inspiration des Grands Monuments du Cambodge Ancien," *Conferenze*, Vol. V of *Serie Orientale Roma*, ed. Giuseppe Tucci (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1952), 1-23.

great monuments at Angkor. Even the periodization reflects their priority. Thus, Coedès discusses the styles of the pre-Angkor period of the seventh and eighth centuries and then the span from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries which he terms the Angkor period. During the eighth century, Cambodia had been divided into two kingdoms, one of which was ruled by Java. But in 802, King Jayavarman II seized power, reunified an independent Cambodia, and laid out his new capital close to the future site of Angkor.¹²⁾

Briefly, in the pre-Angkor epoch, the most ancient existent monuments of the Khmers utilize a square brick structure with a series of stories of decreasing size. The tallest story then would be the central story, and its needle pointing into the sky might be considered the nucleus of a three-dimensional mandala. At the same time, the connection of kingship with sanctuary is real and growing. While inscriptions reveal the names of divinities for whom the sanctuaries were constructed, they also reveal the existence of idols consecrated "for the increase of the merits" of the deceased relatives of the builder. This is the first sign of an evolving funerary cult which later extends to the construction of a lingam for the king who builds the sanctuary. Finally, toward the end of this pre-Angkor period, the name of a deceased king, Indraloka or Puskara, appears on a lingam. The monuments are in process of becoming funerary shrines for kings who are divinized after death.¹³⁾

During the Angkor period, the time of the great monuments, the king has become a divine figure, even while still alive. And at death his body is placed in a funerary monument, and the name of the god with whom he has united himself is indicated. Gradually, apotheosis becomes the privilege of princes and members of the aristocracy, creating a legacy of innumerable statues dedicated to the "body of glory" of So-and-So. But the most remarkable innovation of this period is the development of a new architectural style—a sanctuary mounted on a pyramid of steps, found only in the capital or its immediate environs, and thus strictly associated with the seat of royal power. And perhaps the culmination of the religious understanding being expressed is the installation of the royal lingam atop the pyramid.¹⁴⁾ For Coedès, the symbolism here is clear: the pyramid re-

12) *Ibid.*, p. 4.

13) *Ibid.*, p. 6.

14) *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

presents the sacred mountain of India; it is a replica of Mount Meru and functions to establish a bridge between the gods and men through the instrumentality of the king. In fact, says Coedès, the installation of the lingam atop the pyramid—a temple-mountain—coincides with the institution of the cult of the devaraja. This “Master of the world who is the king,” attested by a text from 1052, seemed to represent an integration of the king’s personal cult with the abstract divinization of the king. It had political significance in its aim of independence for Cambodia and unification under the authority of a universal monarch.¹⁵⁾ The cakravartin ideal, in other words, has been expressed in the sturdy externality of pyramid and lingam. It is a three-dimensional or plastic mandala once again.

But—at least in the estimation of P. H. Pott—the most important Buddhist monument in the entire world was a specimen of Javanese architecture: the temple of Borobudur.¹⁶⁾ Known from at least the fourteenth century, the temple seems to have been the domain of the Vajradhara sect, a form of Tantrism particularly familiar to Nepal.¹⁷⁾ The structure, as Pott describes it, is really not a building but a mass of stone covering a small hill; almost an enlarged stupa. Still more, it is a huge three-dimensional mandala, and Pott points to its striking resemblance to the painted mandalas of Nepal and Tibet.¹⁸⁾ A diagrammatic representation of the plan of the temple, or even an air view, illustrates what he means. Six squared stories, each higher one smaller than the one below, enclose three concentric circular inner terraces, each again smaller than its predecessor. Towering over the structure is the central stupa.

Pott understands the whole as a cosmic symbol. He points to the reliefs which decorated the original base, illustrations of the text of the *Karmavibhanga* which describes various kinds of sins and their appropriate punishments in hell. It is the mountain of fire which in the cosmic conception encircles the world.¹⁹⁾ The painted mandalas are usually characterized by the same fiery limit—an outer guard which

15) *Ibid.*, pp. 13 ff.

16) P. H. Pott, “Le Bouddhisme de Java et L’Ancienne Civilisation Javanaise,” *Conferenze*, Vol. V of *Serie Orientale Roma*, ed. Giuseppe Tucci (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1952), 116.

17) *Ibid.*, p. 126.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 120.

19) *Ibid.*, pp. 120-22.

for Jung prevents the dissolution of the self in a participation mystique.

In the central stupa, Pott describes the statues of five Buddhas seated in different positions. The fifth is seated in the center, on a higher elevation than the others. Pott identifies these with the five Dhyana Buddhas of the Nepalese system, Vairocana being the central figure occupying the zenith position.²⁰⁾

Pott concludes that the monument is a huge stupa and at the same time a great mandala for the use of pilgrims. It is an external aid to their attainment of the Buddha nature. Thus, a monk would enter the monument and mount the stairs, stage by stage, to the uppermost portion of the edifice. Finally, he would emerge in the fresh air at the pinnacle, able to see and breathe the freedom all around him. It was a representation in space of the liberation of nirvana.²¹⁾

The cakravartin connections of the plastic mandala in Javanese Buddhism are illustrated by events following the death of King Visnuvardhana in 1268. The king's successor, Krtanagara, erected a temple for Visnuvardhana's ashes at Djago. It was characterized by a huge pantheon of bronzes in mandala formation.

Krtanagara's conception of Buddhism may be the key to the temple at Djago. One inscription relates that the king had received a special initiation, the *jñabhiseka*, and received the new name of *Jñanabajreçvara*. Another chronicle from 1364 tells how he devoted himself to *puja*, *yoga* and *samadhi*. He studied a form of Tantrism in which certain terrible deities, the *bhairavas* and *bhairavīs* of Tibet and Nepal, became the object of a cult of the kings. While one function of these demon gods was to frighten off the uninitiated, primarily their task was to encourage mystics in their efforts toward supreme spiritual wisdom. In the cult of Krtanagara, as well as in another fourteenth century cult attested by an inscription—that of King Adityavarman, the king is identified with the terrible deity. He becomes a *bhairava* and his wife, a *bhairavī*. Thus, he is again the bridge between the gods and men, a mediator or Great Guru for his people. And the mandala is intimately associated with the cult. For the *bhairavas* and *bhairavīs* belong in the enclosure of the *çmaçānamandalas* of Tibetan monasteries. These contain eight cemeteries, symbols of the eight areas of human

20) *Ibid.*, p. 122.

21) *Ibid.*, p. 125.

affectivity which must die in the quest for the Buddha nature. Three demon-gods preside at the center.²²⁾

The actual physical layout of any stupa, in David Snellgrove's description,²³⁾ portrays a mandala in space. There is the encircling wall interrupted by four doors with four portals. The same motif is reflected in Nepalese temple-enclosures, and Snellgrove asserts that the temple within a square enclosure characterized later Indian Buddhism as well. Again, as Snellgrove points out, symbols of royalty and power adorned all three forms—stupa, temple, mandala.²⁴⁾

Finally, it is possible to trace the mandala in monumental form even further back, with Professor Tucci, to the Babylonian zigurrat, the imperial city of the cakravartin and the sacred mountain at the center of the universe.²⁵⁾

Paul Mus' fascinating study of the "Buddha Paré" provides a striking corroboration from the realms of Buddhist statuary and sutra for the many-faceted manifestation of the mandala and its close connection with the historical cakravartin theme.²⁶⁾ In this article, Mus refers to figures of the Buddha in royal dress found throughout Indo-China. The figures are of ancient origin, and Mus believes they are representations of the historic Buddha. Yet, historically the Buddha left a worldly existence to take up a monastic one. The question thus becomes one of a reason for the royal garb. Mus' hypothesis is that the statues were connected with a ceremonial ritual which marked a road leading to Tantrism. Inscriptions on the sculptures, says Mus, link them to the Mahayana doctrine of the Trikaya. He cites as further evidence the discovery in 1922 of a stone tablet with eight scenes from the life of the Buddha. The central figure in them is Gautama as Bodhisattva. He is seated on a lotus as a throne, carrying an adorned crown and necklace.²⁷⁾

22) *Ibid.*, pp. 134 ff.

23) D. L. Snellgrove, "The Notion of Divine Kingship in Tantric Buddhism," *The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions, Rome, April 1955*, Vol. IV of *Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 213.

24) *Ibid.*

25) Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, trans. A. H. Broderick (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1970), p. 23.

26) Paul Mus, "Le Buddha Paré," *L'École Française d'Extrême Orient, Bulletin*, 1928, pp. 153-278.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 157.

An Indian origin for the crowned Buddha figure is suggested by the 1921-1922 report of Ramaprasad Chanda of the Indian Museum of Calcutta of similar tablets with scenes from the life of the Buddha in which the crowned Buddha figures.²⁸⁾ Mus attributes them to the great monastery of Nalanda in Bengal, a ninth century monastery which Pott identifies as a sort of Monte Cassino for the Buddhism of Java, Tibet and Nepal.²⁹⁾ At any rate, Mus reports the theory of Coedès concerning the depictions: the eight scenes in the life of the Buddha on the stone tablets represent eight places of pilgrimage in central India with a sacred statue from each. A comparison of the main motifs and the details of the statues supports this view. Yet the problem remains, at the places of pilgrimage *all* the statues are monastic, while the tablets contain a mixture of crowned and monastic figures.

Another piece for the puzzle comes from the testimony of a Chinese pilgrim of the seventh century, Hiuan-tsang, who reported the existence of a statue of Māravijaya to which ornaments were added. The statue appears to have been the object of a Tantric cult.³⁰⁾

Beliefs dating from at least the first century of our era had identified the Buddha with the cakravartin, the universal monarch. In fact, Asoka himself may have capitalized on the existence of a cakravartin tradition in his quest for dominion. And the cakravartin ideal was expressed in the later theory of the Trikaya. Now the royal Buddha of the statues and the tablets was often represented as the center between two bodhisattvas. This is the traditional representation for the Sambhogakaya or transcendent Buddha-body of later Tantrism. In Mus' explanation, the Mahayanists decorated older tradition-laden statues so that their new faith could discern by means of the added royal ornaments the image of the transcendent Buddha who is the Bodhisattva. At the same time, in conserving the older statuary, the Mahayanists could stand on their claim to be the true heirs of the Buddhist tradition. They became, to borrow a phrase from Professor Martin E. Marty, "traditionalists against tradition."

In other words, what Mus is talking about is a progression leading from the Buddha as cakravartin, to the statue of the cakravartin with bodhisattvas as the transcendent Buddha, to the doctrinal form of

28) *Ibid.*, p. 160.

29) Pott, p. 130.

30) Mus, p. 168.

Trikaya with the cakravartin as Sambhogakaya. There is a movement from historical event to higher and higher levels of abstraction and/or interiorization.

Mus' method involves a parallel exposition of texts along with his study of iconography. Satisfied by the comparison that texts and statuary display a high level of mutuality, he shows how in the development of the sutras there was a serious attempt to reveal the transcendent doctrine rising out of the life and teaching of the historic Buddha.

The *Saddharmapundarika* or the *Lotus of the Good Law* is Mus' case in point. This Mahayana text contains two parts: a preaching to the ordinary disciples (monks) and a preaching to the bodhisattvas. Thus, two successive states of the preaching are presented—one hidden in dogma and one brought out into the clear. Both center on the infinite person of the Buddha. The sutra, in fact, is attempting to attach the teaching of its transcendent doctrine to the course of the earthly existence of the Buddha. It presents a direct parallel to what must have been done in common Buddhist sanctuaries, a recognition of the transcendent Buddha behind the human appearance of Sakya-muni.³¹⁾ Still more direct, in the *Lotus* the text speaks of honoring the Buddha with a necklace of pearls.³²⁾ Symbolic adornments are given in story as in statue as the identifying attribute of the transcendent Buddha.

Thus, for Mus the Buddha Paré is but one example of the cult rendered to the transcendent Buddha body. It is only one episode in the history of the Sambhogakaya. The probable next step in the evolution is just as interesting. Mus admits that the obscurity of texts is a problem, but he can still find evidence that the tradition of the Sambhogakaya corresponds with secret practices in an era when they were widespread. Involved are forms of yoga which seek to localize the Trikaaya in the statue, then in the mandala, finally within the yogin himself.

The statue of the Buddha with bodhisattvas seems to represent a plastic mandala in two ways. That the localization of the Trikaaya in a statue such as the Buddha Paré prefigured the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya of the painted mandala is seen clearly

31) *Ibid.*, pp. 175 ff.

32) *Ibid.*, p. 187.

for instance in the *Hevajra Tantra*.³³) The analogies with the interior evocation of the mandala in the yogin's body are succinctly described by Snellgrove. Each Buddha body is associated with a distinct position in space, formula of personality and position in the human body. Thus, the Nirmanakaya occupies the nadir position, representing the bodily form of personality, and finds the navel as its bodily locus. The Sambhogakaya is associated with the zenith position in space, the human personality mode of speech and a bodily position in the throat. And the Dharmakaya, the supreme form of the Buddha body, rests at the center in space, operates in the mind of the human personality, and finds the heart as its situs in the human body.³⁴)

Mus' discussion of the Chinese caves of Touen-houang uncovers a second way in which the Buddha statue is a mandala. In the caves, themes related to the *Lotus*—in fact, illustrations of the text—are depicted. In the spatial arrangement of the transcendental assembly, the Buddha surrounded by bodhisattvas preaches on high. He is the central point of a circular painting, and the painting is magical or sacramental: it conveys something of the power and zeal of a better age to later ages.³⁵) Three ingredients for the mandala—circle, center and magic—are therefore operative.

The way from statue to total interiorization in the yogin's body seems to lead via the medium of the painted mandala and then the ritual associated with it. The transformation of the three-dimensional plastic mandala to a two-dimensional iconic one brings the magic circle into the form which Jung finds so prevalent. But as Coedès and Pott and Mus have all indicated by their studies, this horizontal mandala is an evolution of an earlier structural form.³⁶) In fact, it seems to have grown up *within* the temple-enclosures as a horizontal motif. So Snellgrove cites the Tabo Monastery in Spiti, Tibet, in which the main temple still contains the complete mandala of Vairocana with the four Buddhas of the directions and their accompanying divinities.³⁷) He mentions too the circular mandala plaques contained in most of the

33) D. L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*, Part I (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

34) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

35) Mus, pp. 223 ff.

36) *Supra*, pp. 5 ff.

37) D. L. Snellgrove, "The Notion of Divine Kingship in Tantric Buddhism," p. 212.

religious enclosures of Nepal. One example, which combines both a plastic and an iconic mandala, is the Mahābuddhavihara in Pātan. Here there are four stories—Sakyamuni at the bottom, then Amitabha followed by a small stupa, finally on the apex, the vajra-dhātu-mandala. The whole is a representation of the three Buddha bodies with the mandala as a symbol of the supreme Buddha body.³⁸⁾ Louis Finot, another noted scholar of the phenomenon, even calls the mandala “un temple fictif.”³⁹⁾

While Jung defines “mandala” as the Sanskrit word for circle,⁴⁰⁾ Lessing and Wayman in their edition of Mkhas Grub Rje’s *Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* pursue the term in such a way as to underline its meaning as sacred *space*. “Manda” means “essence” or “pith.” “La” means a “seizing.” So “mandala” conveys a sense of “seizing the essence” or “enclosing the essence.”⁴¹⁾ It does not seem a misreading to interpret “essence” here as what is real or sacred. And the sense of enclosure of space connects to the three-dimensional, structural forms of the phenomenon. The still extant practice of drawing a mandala within a mandala house in some cases reflects the same origination.⁴²⁾

In his article on “The Notion of Divine Kingship in Tantric Buddhism,” Snellgrove carefully traces the connections between the iconic mandala and the theme of divine kingship through a study of four sutras in the chronological order of their composition. The oldest, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, contains the most explicit references to kingship. Probably a fifth century text, its mandala boasts three families which attempt to make a unified whole of religious experience stemming from various sources—Buddhist, Brahmanic and magical.⁴³⁾ Later, in the *Tattvasamgraha* comes a four family synthesis of Buddhist and Brahmanic elements in which Vairocana reigns as the Buddha at the center. A transcendent form of Sakyamuni and the possessor of uni-

38) *Ibid.*, p. 213.

39) Louis Finot, “Manuscripts Sanskrits de Sādhana’s Retrouvés en Chine,” *Journal Asiatique*, 225 (July-Sept., 1934), 14.

40) C. G. Jung, “Concerning Mandala Symbolism,” p. 355.

41) Mkhas Grub Rje, *Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*, trans. Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman (Paris: Mouton, 1968), p. 270 n.

42) *Ibid.*, p. 281.

43) D. L. Snellgrove, “The Notion of Divine Kingship in Tantric Buddhism,” pp. 207-208.

versal dharma-sovereignty, he resides in a temple-palace in the center of the mandala and wears full royal regalia.⁴⁴⁾ Again, the *Guhyasamāja* continues the progression with five families, while the *Hevajra-tantra* of the eighth century contains six.⁴⁵⁾ Snellgrove finds significance in the fact that the oldest work affirms the kingship theme the most strongly. This would line up with a hypothesis of the gradual emergence of the mandala from an ancient relationship with the cakravartin. And, even with the less explicit allusions of the later works, Snellgrove's overall conclusion is that Vairocana, as cakravartin-buddha par excellence, holds the central position in the mandala in both the Mahayana and Vajrayana periods. Thus, in its purely physical aspect, it would seem that the mandala arose neither from "dreams and visions" nor from the brain of a "Mahayana church father."⁴⁶⁾ It may rather have been the flattening out of the three-dimensional stupa or monument or Buddha statue, in some way always connected with the sacral king.

At this juncture, a look at the mandala as it functioned in the Buddhist ritual is in order. Such an examination suggests again that the internal psychic product which Jung has isolated is only one dimension of a complex and fascinating phenomenon. In Tantric ritual, the mandala functions in an external social context as part of a liturgy which again appears to have emerged gradually from royal cultic origins. For the validating feature in king-making had been the abhiseka or anointment-consecration rite.

"Abhiseka" means literally a "pouring upon." In Hastings' *Encyclopedia* it is remarked that "the ceremonial sprinkling, anointing, or baptizing of persons and things is a usage of such antiquity and universality, that its origin and significance could not methodically be made the subject of an inquiry confined to India."⁴⁷⁾ So it is not surprising to find variations on the abhiseka theme cropping up in Javanese, Tibetan and even Japanese rites from the early years of our era to the present-day. The intimate connection between the abhiseka-sprinkling and kingship is historically attested by the fact that the

44) *Ibid.*, pp. 209 ff.

45) *Ibid.*, p. 218.

46) *Supra*, p. 5.

47) F. W. Thomas, "Abhiseka," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, I (1908), 20.

persons par excellence who received the abhiseka were emperors. It was purported to bestow upon them their paramount power. Asoka, for example, was only crowned by the abhiseka after four years of conflict. Gradually, the rite was extended to kings, heirs-apparent, ministers of state, and even images at the time of their inauguration.⁴⁸⁾ The abhiseka, in short, appears to have been a specialized vocational initiation rite.

In its Indian form, the abhiseka generally featured sacred places (throne seats, tiger skins on the ground, sacrificial centers), sacred objects (an adumbara branch, a golden plate, a throne seat of adumbara wood, a cup and consecration fluid), and sacred ceremonies (mantras, prayers, sprinklings, gestures). Traditional form usually involved a preparatory bath of purification by the king. Then, seated on his throne with his queen, the king would be sprinkled by chiefs, priests, ministers and citizens. Prayer would be offered, and finally the king would present gifts to the ministers of the rite.⁴⁹⁾

Various forms of abhiseka came to be associated with varying needs and functions. There was, for instance, the aindra mahābhiseka which followed the rites by which Indra was consecrated king of the gods. In the punarabhiseka, the person concerned was already a crowned king, and the object of the rite was to reinforce his vigor. The rājasūva was an elaborate ritual for a king desiring paramount power; and unlike the abhiseka as an act of state, this was an optional religious act. The vājapeva, for "one desiring supremacy" or "one desiring abundance of food" could be extended not only to kings, but also to (supply) others in the three highest castes.⁵⁰⁾

In specifically Buddhist usage, the abhiseka became the last of the ten stages of perfection (bhūmis).⁵¹⁾ Dasgupta relates that in early Buddhism, the rite appeared in initiation to the vow of pabbajjā (renunciation) and a similar initiation to the vow of upasampadā which marked the arrival and entry of a monk into the Saṃgha. Indispensable for the spiritual practice of esoteric Buddhism, abhiseka flourished in the secret cult generally known as Vajrā-bhiseka. Here four abhisekas were usually involved in the initiation ceremony: the jar,

48) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

49) *Ibid.*, p. 22.

50) *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

51) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

the secret cult, perfect wisdom and adamant truth. "It is said that the Yogin who wishes to attain the Yogihood without proper initiation only darts a blow to the sky with fists and drinks the water of mirage." ⁵²)

If the abhiseka betrayed a strong identification with royal initiation, it displayed an equally definite relationship with the mandala in Vajrayana Buddhism. It is not difficult to construct reasons for this, since the abhiseka was linked to sacred places; and stupa, monument, statue and temple-enclosure—all three-dimensional mandalas as we have seen ⁵³)—were all preeminently holy space. So the flattened, two-dimensional mandala becomes a natural center for the evolved abhiseka rite.

The abhiseka-mandala union perdures throughout the Middle Ages into modern times, and examples of rites from various countries in the general path of Vajrayana reveal a basic structural similarity in the ritual which has been equally lasting. Overall it should be noted that the movement is again from history to mystery: from king to royal ritual to ritual of initiation. And if the three-dimensional and two-dimensional mandalas represented the plastic and iconic forms of affirming the sacrality of the center, the abhiseka ritual was the *kinetic* form in which the drama of the center was *acted out*. As the king had been the sacred centering axis for his people, their mediator-bridge to the gods, the Vajrayana initiate had reached the center of Buddhist reality and could function as bodhisattva-savior to the masses. He had become an axis and a bridge.

A spot tour of some of these abhiseka-mandala rituals follows.

The *Hevajra Tantra*, from the latter half of the eighth century, was a Sanskrit work which is extant in Tibetan and Chinese translations. Hevajra himself is a manifestation of Aksobya, to whose family the whole tantra belongs. The rite of mandala-consecration begins as the yogin prepares the site and inscribes the mandala, "in a garden or in a lonely spot or in a bodhisattva's house or in the centre of the mandala hall . . ." ⁵⁴) In other words, the rite calls for a space which is the Center. The painted or inscribed mandala simply

⁵²) Shashi B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1950), p. 176.

⁵³) *Supra*, pp. 5 ff.

⁵⁴) D. L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, p. 81.

underlines this designation. Further, every liturgical interaction associated with the mandala is charged with a spiritual symbolism. Not the slightest word or gesture or deed is accomplished lightly.

The master enters the mandala as the two-armed Hevajra followed by the eight blissful "Spells" adorned with bangles and necklaces. The yogin embraces and kisses them, drinks camphor and sprinkles the mandala with it. The women follow suit, drink wine, eat meat and herbs. They sing and dance to honor the yogin and then reenact the union of vajra (male) and lotus (female) in ritual intercourse. Now the pupil may enter the mandala, his eyes blindfolded with a cloth to symbolize the closing of his old worldly eyes in order that new spiritual sight may be granted him. The pupil pronounces praise and worship, and the consecrations are performed in order. There are four: first of all, the consecration with knowledge which includes the jar consecration (sprinkling), a crowning, the giving of the vajra and bell, and a naming ceremony. In the second consecration, the guru initiates his disciple into the significance of the mandala and its parts. The third portion is called the secret consecration, and the master drops the sacramental bodhicitta in the pupil's mouth. In the final consecration, that of knowledge of wisdom, the master presides over his pupil's ritual union with a yogini. The Great Symbol or mudrā, as she is called, is described thus in the tantra: "She is neither too tall, nor too short, neither quite black nor quite white, but dark like a lotus-leaf." ⁵⁵) The mudrā, as the mandala itself and the whole idea of sacred space, is a *centering* image. But unlike a dream image, she functions dramatically and socially as part of a liturgy. The whole ceremony, thus, is an external and communal construction. The benefit of the individual initiate will become the benefit of others through his bodhisattva vow.

Another ritual associated with the Hevajra cult is described in the *Hevajrasekaprakriva* found in the Buddhist monastery of Tchö-kiang. The manuscript seems to have been brought from India to China in 1057 A.D. ⁵⁶) As the text opens, the author announces that he will describe the consecration associated with Hevajra. What follows is quite similar in pattern to the rite as described in the *Hevajra Tantra*. In the pravesā or introduction of the disciple, the master—who has completed his own meditation on the mandala—takes the disciple into

55) *Ibid.*, p. 116.

56) Louis Finot, "Manuscrits Sanskrits de Sādhana's Retrouvés en Chine."

the magic circle with him. The latter, in ritual dress and carrying ritual objects, is sprinkled by his master with water from a jar. The master then throws a flower garland, and the place where it lands indicates the powers which the disciple will receive, according to the deity who is designated in the spot. Following this, the disciple presents gifts to his master. Connections with the old Indian abhiseka rite are obvious here.

The abhiseka rite proper consists of the four consecrations enumerated in the *Hevajra Tantra* with the first of these sub-divided into five: consecration by water, by a crown; then vajra, bell and name. In the vidyabhiseka or consecration by knowledge the disciple participates in the sacrament of the vajra in which he receives the vajra and bell. Afterwards, the prophecy spoken by the guru lends him encouragement: it is not necessary to neglect the body or harrass it with mortifications. The third consecration, called *avaivarnikābhiseka* or the consecration of homogeneity, requires the master to explain to the disciple the symbolic meaning of the mandala and the deities contained therein. Finally, in the *guhyābhiseka*, the secret consecration, the yogin enacts the rite of union with the yogini. Vajra and lotus meet. The master gives the mudra to his disciple after he has first placed the Thought of Illumination (*bodhicitta*) into his mouth. The rite ends as the disciple makes presents to all according to his means. Then the master, almost anti-climactically, reenters the mandala, sweeps off the colored powders, deposits them in a perfumed box and casts it into the river. He anoints the ground which bore the mandala drawing with cow dung.⁵⁷⁾

A Javanese abhiseka rite from the tenth to the thirteenth century is detailed in a text discovered in 1910: *San hyan kamahayanan mantranaya*. Quite germane to this paper is the manuscript's own description in one of the closing strophes of the sacred action: it is a "cakravarty-abhiseka." And Helmuth von Glasenapp, the translator and commentator, notes its similarities to the rites described in present-day Japan and Tibet by Erwin Rousselle and Alexandra David-Neel respectively.⁵⁸⁾ In his comparison of the Javanese text to Louis

⁵⁷⁾ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁾ Helmuth von Glasenapp, "Ein Buddhistischer Initiationsritus des Javanischen Mittelalters," *Tribus: Jahrbuch des Linden-Museums* (Stuttgart: Museum für Länder- und Völkerkunde, 1953), p. 260. *Infra*, pp. 19 ff.

Finot's rendering of the *Hevajra-sekaprakriya*, Von Glasenapp finds the cakravartin motif more outstanding in the *San hyan kamahayanan mantranaya*.⁵⁹⁾ In the former, says Von Glasenapp, the theme of consecration to secret knowledge predominates.

In the Javanese version, the initiation consists of three parts: First, the initiate readies himself for consecration through learning the teaching of the guru concerning the rite. Secondly, he participates in the sacred actions which accompany a true abhiseka. At the last a final rendition of the teaching is presented to him.

The central portion which encloses the sacred actions is most interesting in the present context. Here there are four stages: the pouring of the water—the literal “abhiseka” rite; the presentation to the initiate of the vajra or thunderbolt as a sort of swearing rod as well as the presentation of the bell and mudrā; the mandala ritual; the presentation of a needle as a surgical instrument to represent the initiate's new spiritual eyes and a mirror as symbol of the knowledge of sunyata.⁶⁰⁾

The purpose of this rite—and all of the Tantric consecration-abhisekas—is to make the initiate capable of obtaining illumination. In other words, he is to become a Buddha; and as the Buddha, in his evolution as a centering religious figure, became cakravartin, the remnants of royal ritual in the abhiseka rite are quite appropriate. One who had attained illumination was truly king-like: he commanded himself and his world: he was no longer subject to illusion and/or rebirth.

The social and communal dimension of the abhiseka rite is perhaps best seen in the Japanese Tantric ritual of the Shingon sect which is still alive today. In Erwin Rousselle's description of the pratīyabandha-abhiseka, which was brought from China to Japan in the ninth century, the functionaries—aside from the initiand—include 1) an acarya or master; 2) a priest of the homa-rite who destroys the sins of the initiand as the representative of the acarya; 3) eight leaders or mystagogues who help with instructions and call out the results of the casting of the flower; 4) a confirmation priest who gives the candidate blessings in the foreroom of the temple of initiation; 5) four introducers who conduct the candidate from the readying hall to the temple of initiation; 6) a pre-readying priest who introduces

59) Helmuth von Glasenapp, “Ein Buddhistischer Initiationsritus des Javanischen Mittelalters,” p. 263.

60) *Ibid.*, pp. 260-61.

the candidate to the idea of consecration and allows him to take the vows; 7) finally, an invisible choir of priests which from behind the altar greets the new and future Buddha by a disclosure of the hidden mysteries.⁶¹⁾

The actual rite is equally elaborate. Divided into four major divisions, each such division is characterized by intricate and detailed subdivisions. Thus, the introduction includes a samaya-rite for the transmission of the grace of the Buddha to the hopeful candidate in which the candidate confesses the state of his soul and receives instruction in the meaning of abhiseka. After this, he pronounces the bodhisattva vow. In the second part of the introduction, a procession to the initiation room ends with a symbolic sprinkling by a priest with holy water. There follows an adhishana-rite in the foreroom of the temple in which the candidate receives the blindfold, has his eyes bound and is led into the initiation room—after preliminary instructions, mantra-quotations and benedictions.

In the second major division, the rite in the mandala-room, the candidate's entrance proceeds ceremoniously as he steps over a smoking elephant censer, symbol of the elephant which Buddha rode, as did the Indian crown-prince at his consecration. Then, in the pratīyabandha rite, the initiate is led to the mandalas where he sits reverently with his middle fingers pressed around a yellow campaka-flower as a diamond wedge. After praying in a pre-ordained formula, he throws the flower; and whatever higher being in the mandala it falls upon becomes his patron. Now the eight mystagogues announce where the flower has fallen. If it has landed on a Buddha or a bodhisattva, the initiate is judged worthy to receive the secret teaching. After removing the blindfold, the initiate receives his mudrā and mantra and corresponding new name.

The third portion of the rite centers around the showing of the pictures on the side naves. First the giant Sanskrit syllable known as the germ-syllable confronts the new initiate. It is painted in gold on a white kakemono, filled with mantric power as the instrument of meditation. Further, as the mystical symbol for the element water it has special significance for the abhiseka rite. After the candidate has

61) Erwin Rousselle, "Ein Abhiseka-Ritus im Mantra-Buddhismus, I-III," *Sinica-Sonderausgabe, Jahrgang 1934*, ed. Erwin Rousselle (Frankfurt A.M.: J. W. Goethe Universität, 1934), 63.

paid his homage, he is led to the pictures of the four holy fathers to whose company he now belongs. He pays homage to these and to four more holy fathers who greet him on the other wall.

In the final major segment of the rite, a consecration at the altar unfolds, comprised of the actual abhiseka rite and a homa-rite. In the abhiseka, the initiand is brought to the acarya who crowns him with a five-pointed bodhisattva crown on which the five Dyhana-Buddhas are pictured. Then the acarya gives the candidate a golden bracelet for his wrist, the sign of kingly power. Water consecrated by the diamond wedge and mixed with perfume is at hand in five vessels. The acarya dips his wand into this and touches the head of the candidate five times. Delusion and sin are thus to be washed from the head of the candidate so that he will come to realize his true nature in unity with the Buddha. The acarya recites a mantra for this purpose, gives the candidate perfumed powder for his hands, as well as the diamond wedge, a golden wheel—symbol of the saving teaching and of world power—and a conch shell—symbol of preaching and of the gathering of military forces. Now he hands the initiand a crystal of myrrh or a mirror with which to recognize himself as king and Buddha. A new name is then bestowed upon him and a piece of paper with the list of the succession of the fathers of the Shingon sect.

The homa-rite is one of homage and exit. During the consecration, it has already begun on an incense table where a holy fire is lighted to burn up all the sins of the candidate and all the evil of his karma. Through music from behind the altar, a choir of priests greets the new initiate who meanwhile gives the crown regalia back, save for the succession list which he keeps. After homage before the various pictures and a final depositing of the ritual objects, he leaves the temple.⁶²⁾

Even a superficial analysis of this rite reveals a close alliance between the three-dimensional mandala of the building, the two-dimensional mandalas painted on the floor, the dramatic consecration of the initiand as a Buddha and bodhisattva who is a new religious center, the presence of a host of official community members as functionaries, the close interweaving of the kingly motif in the pattern of the consecration.

The Tibetan enactment of the same themes of the abhiseka tradi-

62) *Ibid.*, pp. 64-74.

tion is revealed in Alexandra David-Neel's fascinating account of the rite of angkour.⁶³⁾ David-Neel emphasizes that the main focus of the rite is not the transmission of secrets but rather the conferment of psychic power or force. Initiations, as she describes them, are of three sorts—exoteric, esoteric and mystical. In addition, each variety is possessed of a common, medium or superior degree.⁶⁴⁾ Again, initiations may be either with or without activity; and if without activity, simple or absolute.⁶⁵⁾ Thus the whole gamut from rather externalized and communally-oriented ceremonies to the most extreme interiorization of yogic practice is represented.

In one example of an angkour rite of the esoteric or mystical class in the inferior or medium degree, David-Neel describes the ritual among the adepts of the Direct Path. In a set of preliminary motions, the candidate knocks on the guru's door, asking to enter and receive angkour. The lama questions him as to his motives, warns him of the difficulties involved and tries to dissuade him. There is the wild music of tambourines, bells, cymbals and gongs, prayer to the Dakinis, warnings issuing from the closed door of an inner chamber—all to frighten the would-be candidate from the arduous task he seeks to accomplish. At last, if he endures the dire ordeal, the door is opened, and the candidate prostrates himself at the feet of the master in front of the mandala. Now the disciple is allowed to be seated and drink blessed water. Consecrated pills may also be administered to him, as also various symbolic objects, such as a lighted lamp placed for an instant on his head. Then with bound eyes the candidate is conducted to the mandala of five points ranged around a central void. He throws an arrow and the place where it lands, as usual, determines his patron deity.⁶⁶⁾

The predominance of the number five should be noted here as also in the *Hevajra Tantra* where there are five families grouped around the center. Unlike the Jungian mandala which features the quaternity in a symbol of the complete self, these mandalas add an extra dimension. A minor point perhaps, but a distinct departure from the Jungian

63) Alexandra David-Neel, *Initiations Lamaïques* (Paris: Adyar, 1957), pp. 49 ff.

64) *Ibid.*, p. 50.

65) *Ibid.*, p. 66.

66) *Ibid.*, pp. 59 ff.

understanding of the symbolism of four. In fact, Snellgrove's discussion of the absorption of families in the evolution of the Tantric sutras discloses the historical progression which shapes the mandala.⁶⁷) Albeit an archetypal structure to the human mind which may manufacture a symbolic fourness to image the complete self, external religious systems are compassed in the mandala in a process of cultural fusion.

Thus the major conclusions from this selective examination of some Buddhist Tantric sources suggest a complex and intricate relationship between the external, social order and the inner, psychological realm in the Buddhist forms. Eliade's discussion of the 'ritual interiorization' of the Vedic sacrifice in the yogic asceticism of the tapas comes to mind as an analogous phenomenon⁶⁸)—although in the tapas the interiorization seems more complete.

The Eastern forms of the mandala give all the signs of being several middle stages in a process of internalization. In the Buddhist monuments and statuary, painted mandalas and abhiseka rites, the archaic remains of a more externally understood religion still function. They are filtered through a new, more interiorizing prism. Yet the almost total interiorization and isolation of Jung's European mandalas seems not to have been reached. While Jung was correct in the aspects of the two phenomena to which he adverted—their psychological dimension—it is submitted that there was much to which he did not advert. And these unacknowledged aspects of the Eastern mandala phenomenon sufficiently color the manifestation so that in positing an identity in the Eastern and Western processes, Jung perhaps was oversimplifying.

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aksobya—the Dhyana (meditation) Buddha of the East, known as the Immutable One. He is the Mirror of Wisdom, linked to the ability to reflect and understand form, springing ultimately from the pure consciousness which Vairocana, the central Dhyana Buddha, represents.

Amitabha—the Buddha of Infinite Light and of the Western Paradise. He is the Dhyana (meditation) Buddha associated with unlimited compassion because of his total perception of cause and effect.

Angkour rite—Tibetan Tantric ritual of initiation.

Bodhicitta—the Thought or Consciousness of Enlightenment. It was the spark which prompted the quest for Enlightenment and in sacramental form became the "drop of wisdom" used in various mandala rituals.

67) *Supra*, p. 13.

68) Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 111 ff.

- Bodhisattva—an enlightened being who is on the verge of Buddhahood but who postpones the full experience out of compassion for the needs of others and in the interests of their salvation; the ideal and model in Mahayana Buddhism.
- Dakinis—the five female counterparts of the Dhyana (meditation) Buddhas.
- Dharma—that which supports or undergirds; hence, law, custom, body of doctrines or teachings.
- Dharmakaya—the law-body or truth-body of the Buddha. Here the Buddha is understood as the innermost essence of all beings, identical with ultimate truth and absolute reality. This is the highest of the Buddha bodies.
- Dhātu—a primary or root element, such as the components of existence or the factors which mediate experience; i.e., sense data and organs, sensations.
- Dhyana Buddhas—meditation Buddhas which were representations of aspects of phenomenal existence in a transformed condition.
- Gautama—name of the historical Buddha.
- Jinabhiseka—consecration rite for a conqueror or victor king.
- Lama—"superior one"; an honorific designation for a Tibetan monk.
- Lingam—a cultic reproduction of the male generative organ, usually symbolizing the Indian god, Shiva.
- Mahayana—"larger vehicle." The Buddhism of East Asia as distinguished from Theravada Buddhism (the "Way of the Elders") of Southeast Asia. It emphasizes the salvation of all sentient beings and is characterized by a multiplication of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures.
- Nirmanakaya—the earthly and lowest body of the Buddha in the Mahayana Trikaya doctrine.
- Nirvana—the state in which being and non-being are resolved into ultimate bliss for the person who has become enlightened.
- Puja—cultic rituals of worship and adoration for Indian deities.
- Sakyamuni—"Sage of the Sakyas," a tribe of warrior caste which lived on the Indian-Nepalese border just below the Himalayan foothills and from which the historical Buddha was said to have originated; thus, a name for the historical Buddha.
- Samadhi—concentration as part of Indian yogic technique; the final stage of meditation which involves ecstatic trance.
- Sambhogakaya—the "body of bliss"; the radiant illuminated body of an enlightened being in the manifestation of its glory. A "middle" body between the Nirmanakaya and the Dharmakaya.
- Samgha—the Buddhist community; especially, the Buddhist monastic community.
- Stupa—Buddhist reliquary shrine.
- Sunyata—the Void which is empty of all determinations; the Mahayana understanding of the ultimate goal of enlightenment which supplants the older notion of nirvana.
- Sutra—sacred text or scripture.
- Tantrism—the third and esoteric form of Buddhism and a form of Hinduism as well. The term is derived from the tantras which were manuals of ritual practice. Tantrism centered on a recognition of the bipolarity of the cosmos, the corresponding bipolarities of the self, and the consequent need for an experience of unification.
- Tapas—in Indian yogic asceticism, the austerities associated with the raising of heat (the interiorization of the sacred ritual fire) in the body.

Trikaya—the three bodies of the historical Buddha or any enlightened being.

They were the earthly body (Nirmanakaya), the glorified body of bliss (Sambhogakaya), and the body in its pure essence (Dharmakaya).

Vairocana—the Great Sun Buddha or Illuminator. Vairocana was often positioned at the center of the Dhyana Buddhas to represent the pure form of cosmic consciousness.

Vajra—thunderbolt or diamond. Refers to that which is hard and irresistible and so to supreme spiritual truth.

Vajrayana—the third and esoteric form of Buddhism; also known as Tantrism.

SOME RELIGIO-COMMUNAL TERMS AND CONCEPTS IN THE QUR'ĀN

BY

FREDERICK MATHEWSON DENNY

University of Virginia, U.S.A.

The most important single religio-communal term in the Qur'ān and in the history of Islam is *ummah*, "community". In the Qur'ān the term has a variety of meanings and applications, but the most important is its designation of the Muslims as a community in a special sense. This study is a sequel to an earlier article on *ummah* in the Qur'ān.¹⁾ As such it seeks to understand more about the Qur'ān's teaching concerning the Ummah in its definitive sense. In our preparation of this study we have been impressed by the frequent use of religio-communal expressions and concepts, not only in connection with the Muslims but with numerous other groups as well. The most important of these are treated here under the following three heads: first, the important special terms *ḥanīf/ḥunafā'* and *millah*; second, the names of various groupings, such as *muslimūn* ("submitters"), *mu'minūn* ("believers") and *'ābidūn* ("servants") as well as relatively minor terms such as *qaum* ("people") and *ḥizb* ("party"); and lastly, the covenant idea, focussing on such terms as *mīthāq* ("covenant") and *'ahd* ("covenant, promise").

I. The Terms *Ḥanīf/Ḥunafā'* and *Millah*

Among the religio-communal terms in the Qur'ān other than *ummah* are two of great significance and interest: *ḥanīf/ḥunafā'* and *millah*. Of these two, the first has been the more disputed as to its origin and meaning.²⁾ It is the more specialized of the two terms and pro-

1) "The Meaning of *Ummah* in the Qur'ān," *History of Religions*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (August, 1975), pp. 34-70. — Unless otherwise noted, Qur'ānic quotations in the present article are from Richard Bell, *The Qur'ān: Translated, with a Critical Re-Arrangement of the Surahs*. 2 vols., (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936, 39).

2) The fullest treatment of *ḥanīf* is that of Nabih A. Fariṣ and Harold W. Glidden, "The Development of the Meaning of the Koranic *Ḥanīf*," *Palestine*

vides important clues as to the nature of Muhammad's intent in developing the Muslim *ummah* as a restoration and fulfillment of the Abrahamic ideal.

The root of *ḥanīf* is common to all Semitic languages and is very ancient.³⁾ The Canaanite form *hanpa*, *hanapu* is found in the Tel el-Amarna inscriptions (288, 8) and means there "to be contrary, to slander."⁴⁾ In neo-Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaean it means "pretend, be a hypocrite," while the Syriac *ḥanfo* (or *ḥanpa*) means "pagan."⁵⁾ The native Arabic *ḥanafa* means to "decline," or "incline," but as Jeffery has said,

The Lexicons are quite at a loss what to make of the word حنِفٌ [*hanafun*] is said to be a natural contortedness of the feet, and so حنِفٌ is used of anything that inclines away from the proper standard. As one can also think of inclining from a crooked standard to the straight, so حنِفٌ was supposed to be one who turned from the false religions to the true.⁶⁾

Faris and Glidden may have reached the most intriguing solution to date, that *ḥanīf* is ultimately derived "from the dialects of the Nabateans in whose language it meant a follower of some branch of their partially Hellenized Syro-Arabian religion,"⁷⁾ which, they try to show may be traced back in legend and perhaps in a future historical demonstration, to the time of Abraham himself.⁸⁾ But, as Watt has wisely cautioned:

[now Israel] Oriental Society, *Journal*, XIX (1939-40), 1-18. Cf. also Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958), "Appendice VI: Abraham 'Hanif,' note sur Coran 30: 29; 6: 79; 16: 121; etc.," pp. 151-161.

3) Moubarac, *Abraham*, p. 152.

4) *Ibid.*

5) *Ibid.*

6) Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*. "Gaekwad's Oriental Series," Vol. LXXIX (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), p. 113.

7) Faris and Glidden, "Development of the Koranic Ḥanif," p. 12.

8) Although this is somewhat speculative, the possibility is tantalizing. The final sentences of Faris and Glidden's important examination are worth quoting at length: "...it might be well to stress here certain undercurrents and tendencies in the religious history of the Near East in the period preceding the rise of Islam which, if properly analyzed and followed up, may lead to the solution of this and other problems of a similar nature. According to a statement of Pseudo-Eupolemos quoted by Alexander Polyhistor, Abraham was born in Ur in the tenth generation after the Flood and was the inventor of astrology and the Chaldaean arts, which were pleasing to God, and these he taught the Phoenicians. Artapanos, quoted by the same author... says that Abraham taught astrology to Pharaoh. If one takes this tradition in conjunction with the canonical association of Abraham with Harrān (Gen. 11: 31), it becomes quite understand-

This question of derivation is a secondary matter, however, and, even if the above view is sound [Watt also cited the foregoing passage of Faris and Glidden], it does not necessarily follow—indeed it is unlikely—that this adaptation of Hellenism made an important contribution to the permeation of Arabia by monotheistic ideas.⁹⁾

Among ancient Muslim scholars, Masʿūdī represents the opinion that, as used in the Qurʾān, *ḥanīf* was a foreign word: *wa ḥādhihi kalimatun suryānīyyatun ʿurribat*—“This is a Syrian word which has been Arabicized.”¹⁰⁾ *Ḥanīf* also appears fairly often in the early Muslim period.¹¹⁾ According to Jeffery, the term seems “generally to mean *Muslim* and in the odd occurrences which may be pre-Islamic to mean heathen.”¹²⁾ None of the poetry passages deals with Abraham. How Muhammad saw fit to adapt a word which has one of its meanings “heretic” or “heathen” to refer to the followers of the new faith is not clear. It seems far more likely that *ḥanīf* meant *dīn*, “religion,” as Umayya ibn Abīʾs-Salt held.¹³⁾ All but one (4 : 125) of the Abraham-*ḥanīf* passages includes the stereotyped (or a close approximation) *wa mā kāna min al-mushrikīn*, perhaps indicating Muhammad’s awareness that *ḥanīf* could be taken to mean “heathen,” though this is possibly to say too much. It seems quite certain that the term was adopted to refer to the non-Jewish, non-Christian yet at the same time non-idolatrous mythical and actual persons (i.e., Abraham and his *ummah* and the followers of Muhammad’s preaching as well as such monotheists as Umayya) who were emerging as claimants to the spiritual allegiance of the Arabs.

dable why it should have been to the interest of the later Harranians and those of allied religious belief to make the most of it in order to justify their astral worship before the Jews and the Christians. To Abraham as the father of astral worship they would logically apply the term *ḥanīf*, by which they also designated themselves and thus the circle becomes completed.” *Ibid.*

9) W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 163.

10) Quoted in Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, p. 114, n. 7.

11) See *ibid.* as well as J. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1926), p. 56 ff. and Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran*, pp. 153-159 for examples.

12) Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, *ibid.*

13) Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Linguistic Studies, Keio University, 1964), p. 227. See Hamilton A. R. Gibb, “Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia,” *Harvard Theological Review*, LIV, no. 4 (1962), pp. 279, 80 for a discussion which tends to support this. For a richly exemplified discussion of Umayya’s poetry and its relation to Muslim developments, see Tor Andrae, *Les origines de l’Islam et le Christianisme*, trans. Jules Roche (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955), pp. 55-65.

Jeffery's skeptical attitude concerning the pre-Islamic *ḥanīfs* is in need of challenging, for there were such people and they were not "heathen" in any manner which would be acknowledged by themselves. Jeffery's dismissal of them as sources for etymological research is a curious expression of frustrated philology which assumes too much.

For while we may agree with Lyall, JRAS, 1903, p. 744, that these [i.e., the *Ḥanīfs*] were all actual historical personages, yet the tradition about them that has come down to us has been so obviously worked over in Islamic times, that so far from their stories helping to explain the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān is necessary to explain them.¹⁴⁾

If the origin of *ḥanīf* is in *ḥanpa*, and it may be, it changed somehow until it came to mean "monotheist" or "upright religionist" by Muhammad's time. Professor Fazlur Rahman counsels that the Qurʾān uses the term against a Meccan (and later Medinan) background which knew the term and did not need to have it defined. "After all, the Qurʾān is the visible part of an iceberg nine-tenths of which are out of sight."¹⁵⁾ This sound view does not deny the *ḥanpa* origin; it is rather a testimony to the danger of being determined exclusively by origins of words, particularly when current usage is what is crucial. Etymology is, of course, indispensable, but it is not always conclusive.

Among modern scholars, Nöldeke seems to have been the first to point out the Syriac origin of *ḥanīf*, at least as used in the Qurʾān (not the ultimate source, which is unknown), and adds the comment that its meaning of "heathen" was not fully understood by the Arab borrowers.

Man muss aber bedenken dass die naiven arabischen Heiden von dem Wesen der andern Religionen keine Vorstellung hatten und daher solch Ausdrücke leicht missverstehen und falsch verwenden konnten.¹⁶⁾

14) Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 114.

15) Personal communication, September, 1973.

16) Theodor Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: K. Trübner, 1919), p. 30. The Syriac origin of *ḥanīf* has been generally accepted also by Andrae, *Origines de l'Islam et le Christianisme*, p. 47; Karl Ahrens, "Christliches im Qoran," ZDMG, LXXXIV (1930), p. 28; A. Mingana, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Qurʾān," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XI (1927), p. 97; A. Jeffery, cited above; W. Montgomery Watt, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, s.v., and by Richard Bell, who was "converted" to this position by Jeffery from an earlier preference for the *ḥanaḥa*, "incline, tend," theory of more traditional scholarship, described in the quote from Jeffery above, and still favored by Moubarac, *Abraham*, p. 153: "le sens premier est 'inclinaire, déclinaire.' Le 'ḥanīf' est donc celui qui se détourne. Mais suivant qu'il se détourne de la vraie religion ou de la fausse, c'est un païen

This view of Nöldeke's may be correct, but it is not self-evident and the etymology which he and others following him have reasonably set forth is not sufficient grounds for a final solution of this problem of what the term did or did not mean to the Arabs of Muhammad's day. It is an interesting thesis that Muhammad invented the Qur'ānic *ḥanīf* notion to name an "ideal original of Arab religion," as Bell has suggested. "They were no sect of historical people, but the product of Mohammed's unresting mind." 17) But there is no proof.

Ḥanīf/ḥunafāʾ in the Qurʾān

The twelve instances are all late Meccan or Medinan, according to Nöldeke-Schwally (but Bell takes them all to be Medinan). It is no coincidence that of the ten instances which are in the singular, i.e., as "*ḥanīf*," eight refer to Abraham (2 : 135; 3 : 67, 95; 4 : 125; 6 : 79, 161; 16 : 120, 123). Of these eight, five (2 : 135; 3 : 95, 4 : 125; 6 : 161; 16 : 123) also contain the term *millah*, meaning "religion" (and 16 : 120 contains *ummah*: *inna Ibrāhīm kāna ummatan qānitan lillāhi ḥanīfan*...). The two plural instances (*ḥunafāʾ*) are 22 : 31 and 98 : 5.

All of the twelve passages but one (4 : 125) directly contrast *mushrik* and *ḥanīf* as opposites.

Moubarac has suggested rightly that the "passage le plus expressif" in the Qurʾān concerning *ḥanīf* is 30 : 30:

faʿaqim wajhaka li-ddīni ḥanīfan fiṭrata-llāhi ʾallatī faṭara-nnāsa ʿalaiha la tabdila-l-khalqi llāhi dhālika-ddīnu l-qayyimu walākinna ʾakhtara-nnāsi la yaʿlamūna.

So set thy face towards the religion as a Hanīf—the natural religion laid down by Allah which He hath formed the people by nature to follow

ou un croyant." F. Buhl had reasonably averred that if *ḥanīf* derived from *hanpa*, it must have done so by means of an intermediate form (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v.). Bell has deductively provided a solution of this transference problem: "The long vowel of the second syllable of *ḥanīf* is fatal to its derivation from Syriac *hanpā* in its singular form; but this objection vanishes at once when we look at the plurals. For the Arabic *ḥunafāʾ* is as close a reproduction of the Syriac *hanʿphē* as there is any need to demand. We may therefore assume that the word was borrowed in its plural form, and that the singular *ḥanīf* was formed from that in accordance with one of the rules of correspondence between singular and plural forms in Arabic." "Who Were the Hanifs?", *Muslim World*, XX, no. 2 (1930), p. 121.

17) Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*. "The Gunning Lectures, Edinburgh University, 1925" (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., reprint, 1968), p. 124.

[translator's note: Lit. 'The creation of Allah upon which He hath created the people.'], there is no alteration of the creation of Allah. That is the right religion [translator's note: 'or eternal'], but most of the people do not know.

The "natural religion laid down by Allah" for which mankind have been created is certainly a "reification," in the sense of W. Cantwell Smith's thesis.¹⁸⁾ Here is proposed, as Moubarac has put it "une attitude religieuse donnée."¹⁹⁾ *Homo religiosus* in Qurʾānic terms might be rendered *homo ḥanīfī*. The *ḥunafāʾ* live, according to 22: 31, "not associating (anything) with Him; if anyone associates (anything) with Allah, it is as if he fell down from the heaven, and the birds snatched him away, or the wind swooped with him to a place remote."

Whereas the People of the Book, as can be seen, may be thought of as an *ummah*, or *ummahs*, they do not participate in the *ḥanīfīyyat*, either in the Qurʾān (this term does not appear there, but the idea does) or in later Islām. The *ḥanīfīyyat*, according to the Qurʾān, antedates Judaism and Christianity and, although the Arabs (who according to legend descended from Abraham) have fallen away, their archetypal model still beckons.

O People of the Book, why do ye dispute about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Evangel were not sent down till after his time? Have ye no sense? . . . Abraham was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian, but he was a Ḥanīf, a Moslem, and he was not one of the polytheists.²⁰⁾ (3: 65, 67).

18) Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), *passim*.

19) Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran*, p. 159.

20) According to W. Montgomery Watt, "first *ḥanīf* and later also *muslim* are used in the Qurʾān for adherent of the true religion . . .," *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 205. In the quoted passage the two terms are equated: *mā kāna ʾIbrāhīm yahūdīya wa lā naṣrānīya walākīn kāna ḥanīfan musliman*. K. Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionstifter* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1935), p. 112 ff., is of a similar opinion and points out (as summarized by Helmer Ringgren, "Islam, ʾaslama and muslim," *Horae Soederblomianae* [Uppsala: 1949], p. 30) that "Islam as the name of Muhammed's religion is late and relatively rare in the Koran: 3: 17; 5: 5; 49: 17; 61: 7 from the Medinan period, and only twice in Sūrahs from the third Meccan period: 6: 15; 39: 23." Ringgren, however, disagrees and shows that *muslim* and *ʾaslama* occur as early as the first Meccan period (68: 35 and 51: 36), where Ahrens contends that it has a much more general meaning (as also in 37: 103 and 22: 31, 38, 45), until the end of the Meccan period (6: 163; 39: 12) when Muhammad calls himself "the first of the Muslims." Ringgren prefers to allow the possibility that *muslim* had a technical and exclusive sense (i.e., referring to the followers of Muhammad's preaching, or rather those who "submitted" according to and because of it) early in the Qurʾānic record, where the occurrences do in fact

Abraham was an *ummah* and a *ḥanīf*, as has been seen above (re: 16: 120), obedient to God (*qānitan lillāhi*). The *ḥanīfs* or *ḥunafāʾ* are the true members of the true *ummah*, who hearken to their natural, God-created religion, *ad-dīnu-l-qayyimu*.

Say: 'As for me, my Lord hath guided me to a straight path, on a right religion, the creed [*milla*] of Abraham as a Ḥanīf and he was not one of the associators [*mushrikūn*].'

Say: 'My prayer and my religious exercises [*nusukī*], my living and my dying, are in the hands of Allah, Lord of the worlds, to whom there is no partner; thus have I been commanded, and I am the first of those who surrender themselves.' (6: 161, 162).

Another passage which is similar to 30: 30 (above) and addressed directly to Muhammad's people, beckoning them to be religious in the *ḥanīfī* manner, is 10: 104:

wa ʿan ʿaqīm wajhak līd-dīni ḥanīfan wa lā takūmanna min al-mushrikīn.
And (have been commanded): Set thy face towards the religion as a Ḥanīf, and be not one of those who associates (others with Allah)...

Although God has created a *fiṭra*, a natural tendency, man is still an intentional creature. While in later Islamic theology much effort was expended to preserve God's sovereign will (*mashīʾa*) and guidance (*hidāya*), here in the Qurʾānic record it seems that man is indeed able to subvert and repudiate God's *fiṭra*.²¹) The religion of Allah is "natural" and archetypal, partaking of his *sibghah*. Those of the *ahl al-kitāb*, if they believe as the Muslims are commanded to believe, may be considered as under guidance, indeed as followers of the way of the *ḥanīf*. But the test is the latter revelation of the Qurʾān, and not the previous scriptures, which reveals God's design fullest, and this

admit the possibility of such an interpretation, especially as the term is used (conversely) in the Medinan period in a general and non-technical sense in a few passages, thus ruling out a rigid usage (*ibid.*). Our own view is that, while Ringgren has a point, the technical sense of *muslim* is the product of a long development in which historical events and Muhammad's increasing awareness of founding a new religious community, an *ummah muslimah* in fact, contributed to the progressively exclusive and technical sense of the term, so that by Medina it is equivalent to *ḥanīf*. We hold that it is possible that the development of the *ḥanīf* concept—which undoubtedly had begun in Mecca, but does not appear (we follow Bell's dating here) in the Qurʾān until the Medinan period—enabled *muslim* to become a strong technical and more exclusive term for the followers of Muhammad's religion.

21) For a lucid discussion of this term see D. B. MacDonald, "*Fiṭra*," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition, s.v.

design is a confirmation of the mythical precedence and authority of Abraham and all he stands for in Muhammad's preaching.

Say ye: 'We have believed in Allah and what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Patriarchs and what has been given to the prophets from their Lord, making no distinction between any of them; and to Him are we submissive. So if they believe in something like what ye believe in, they have been guided; but if they turn away, it is they who are in schism; Allah will attend to them for thee, He is the one who hears and knows. The savour [*sibghah*] of Allah, and in savour who is better than Allah? Him are we going to serve. (2: 136-138).

God's religion is marked by His *sibghah*, His "baptism",²²⁾ and God's Baptism is best of all. The sense of purification in *sibghah* supports the sense of purity in the *ḥanīf* concept, and specifies something of the quality of *fiṭra* in this connection.

Ḥanīf as a term applied to a religious group is intimately linked with the Qurʾān's teaching concerning Abraham. In summary, this term expresses the sense of the archetypal religion which Muhammad believed God had created for man to follow in obedience, faith and purity (especially in 30: 30 is this seen); it specifies what man's proper posture toward God is, a "turning of the face" (here the term is semantically enriched by the native Arabic *ḥanafa*, to "lean, incline" which we have reviewed above);²³⁾ and it includes a ritual dimension (6: 162, *nusukī*) which also emphasizes proper orientation in the *ḥajj* toward the center of the world, the *Kaʿabah*.

Ḥanīf/ḥunafā is not really a community term in the sense that *ummah*, *qaum*, or even *millah* are. But it is such an important concept in specifying the quality of the *ummah*, and indeed the people of God from Abraham's time, that it is included here. And there is a kind of religio-communal dimension to it, as may be seen especially in the

22) Bell's "savour" is poignant but not quite right, because *sibghah* here is reflective of Christian Baptism, as Al-Zamakhsharī among Muslim exegetes has pointed out, *Al-Kashshāf*, 4 Vols. (Cairo: Halabi, 1966), I, p. 316. R. Blachère's (*Le Coran*. Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1966) "onction" is perfect in that it combines the "aroma" or "savour" notion with the ritual baptismal.

23) Whether *ḥanīf* derives from the Arabic *ḥanafa*, or as is more likely, as has been shown in this review of the evidence, from the Syriac *hanēpha*, it does seem to possess in a strong measure the "incline, lean" sense in some of the passages where it appears (e.g., 6: 79; 10: 105; 30: 30) and this is an important part of its meaning in the Qurʾānic message.

legendary pious group of *ḥunafāʾ*. *Ḥanīf* is not an abstract concept, but one which in its very essence seems to reflect purposeful spiritual and ritual activity. And it does have a primitive community meaning as "heathen," as well as the idealized meaning connecting the muslims with Abraham as an *ummah muslima*.

Millah

Millah, meaning "religion" or "denomination" in the Qurʾān, is most often found in connection with Abraham, especially in the phrase *millat Ibrāhīm* (2 : 130, 135; 3 : 95; 4 : 125; 6 : 161; 12 : 38; 16 : 123; 22 : 78). It also refers to the religion of the Jews and Christians (2 : 120 and also possibly in the disputed *al-millah al-ākhirā* of 38 : 7),²⁴ and to pagans (18 : 20, concerning the "Seven Sleepers"; 7 : 88, 89 Shuʿayb's story; 14 : 13 and 12 : 37, where the term refers to a *qaumi-llā yuʾminūna billāhi*).

Millah is a loan-word from Aramaic and in the Qurʾān a synonym for the Persian-derived *dīn*.²⁵ According to Buhl, it has not been satisfactorily proved to be connected with Jewish and Christian Aramaic *milla*, *melletā*, *mella*, "utterance, word."²⁶ Jeffery favors a Syriac origin from ܡܠܬܐ, ܡܠܬܐ, "for besides meaning *word*, ܡܠܬܐ, it is also used to translate λόγος, and is used technically for religion."²⁷ Horovitz suggests that the meaning was influenced by the sense of "way."²⁸

Rāghib al-Isfahānī says that *millah* may be used only for a religion proclaimed by a prophet.²⁹

Jeffery sees no evidence for the use of *millah* in its Qurʾānic sense in the pre-Islamic period, "so it may have been a borrowing of Muhammad himself, but doubtless was intelligible to his audiences who were

24) *Mā samiʿnā biḥādhi fī l-millatī-l-ākhirati ʿin hādha ʿillā-khtilaqun*. "We have not yet heard of this, (not) in the (very) last form of religion; this is nothing but a fiction."—Bell's note to his translation of this passage: "The sense is uncertain, probably 'in any religion whatever.'" *Tafsīr al-Jalālāin*: "That is to say, the religion of Jesus." 2 vols. (Cairo: Halabī, 1966), s.v. R. Blachère, *Le Coran*: "Selon les commt., il s'agit de celle de la Mekke," p. 483, n. 6.

25) Rudi Paret, *Der Koran*: Vol. II: *Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1971), p. 30; Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 25.

26) Article "Millah" in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islām*, s.v.

27) Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 268 f.

28) *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 63. Cf. Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 26.

29) Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt fī ḡharīb al-qurʾān* (Cairo: Halabī, 1961), p. 471.

more or less acquainted with Jews and Christians.”³⁰) However, Horovitz³¹) has mentioned that poets contemporary with Muhammad have spoken often of the *millah* of Allah or the *millah* of *ar-rahmān*.³²)

W. Cantwell Smith wonders if *millah*

is not the only word in any language or culture that designates a specific and transferable religion, one as distinct from others, and nothing else. It has never meant ‘faith’ in the intimately personal, nontransferable sense: one man’s faith that is utterly his and no one else’s. Nor could it be used of religion in general, a world-wide religiousness irrespective of the particular form. It seems to designate precisely the form, as an observable and even as it were abstractable, transferable something... Curiously, however, this term did not become very common in Muslim culture. It is not found in Arabic in this meaning before the Qurʾān [Smith follows Jeffery in this], and rather little after it. In later centuries it developed into meaning a particular religious community, the followers of one tradition as distinct from others and considered as a systematic group, rather than the tradition of faith that they followed—a sociological rather than an ideal system.³³)

Smith’s view is a good complement to the more philological emphases of scholars cited in this discussion. *Millah* never has become an important theological concept in Islamic history. (The “Millet” system of the Ottomans was sociologically and politically significant, of course, but that is something quite distinct from the aims of this discussion.) For the history of religions, however, *millah* is an interesting term, for it contributes to the larger picture of the Qurʾān’s concept of a world view in which religious-social groupings were significant. *Millah* does not mean quite what *ummah* means in the full range of their applications, even in the *millat Ibrāhīm* passages. There is some mutuality, or common meaning, and in a few places the two may be translated as “religion,” but *ummah* is a more flexible and comprehensive term, capable of being interpreted in terms of personal faith as well as in a more reified sense. *Ummah* as a religio-communal term is more theological and at the same time more concretely human than *millah*, which seems to be more sociological and technically specific

30) Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 269.

31) *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 63, and noted by Jeffery, *ibid*.

32) See, for example, Kaʿb ibn Mālik in Ibn Hishām, *As-Sīrat an-Nabawīyyah*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Halabi, 1955), II, p. 139.

33) Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, pp. 296-7, n. 86.

(and thus more restricted in its field). *Ummah* symbolizes the believing, acting, intending community of faith and hope and alone among the religio-communal terms in the Qurʾān suggests (and embodies) the dynamic tension between the Ummah as struggling people of God and the Ummah-ideal as norm for faith and order, the “best community ever brought forth” (a hardly chauvinist description when it is seen that such a status is as much a demand as a gift). There can be no *millah wasaṭ*, only an *ummah wasaṭ*—a *millah* does not mediate, it just is, while an *ummah* becomes. It is no accident, it seems to me, that *millah* was not chosen to mean what *ummah* came to mean in the Qurʾān’s message. *Millah* is a good term for neutral employment (*millat Ibrāhīm* is no exception to this, for the distinctiveness of Abraham’s creed is not that it is a *millah*, but that it is a *millah* in a certain sense: *ḥanīfan*, *musliman*, etc.),³⁴) and it is not without a sociological dimension, as has been seen. But only *ummah* combines in a special manner the theological with the sociological in such a way as to express the deep soteriological dimension of the Qurʾānic message, a message which comes to be accepted, nurtured, obeyed and applied by the historical “community in the middle.”

II. *Muslim(-ūn)*, *Muʾmin(-ūn)* and Other Terms

Two terms which designate people in a religious and communal sense are *muslimūn* and *muʾminūn*, both of which are based on words which are of central importance in the Islamic tradition, the first in fact giving itself as the name of it, i.e., *islām*, “submission, surrender.” The *muslimūn* are the “submitters” and the *muʾminūn* are the “believers.” Of the two, the ʾamana-related words (of which *muʾmin/muʾminūn* is an active participle of the fourth form verb) occur many more times than the ʾaslama complex (from which *muslim*, *-ūn* is derived as an active participle). W. C. Smith has pointed out this fact arguing that *īmān*, “faith,” is the greater term and concept both in the Qurʾān and in the developed Muslim theological tradition.³⁵) As Smith has indicated, the active verbal forms *aslama*, *āmana* occur far more fre-

34) Also, the emphasis in this phrase is not on *millah*, but rather on Ibrāhīm: not the “creed of Abraham” but the “creed of Abraham.” Abraham is never described as a *millah*, but he is described as an *ummah* (16: 120).

35) *Meaning and End*, pp. 101-2.

quently than the gerundial form. The word *islām* in fact occurs only eight times in the Qurʾān, while *īmān* occurs 45 times.³⁶) Moreover, *muʾmin* occurs five times more frequently than *muslim*, and the Qurʾān's referring to "faith" (through *āmana*) occurs in all a dozen times more than "submission" (through *aslama*). This comparative tallying should not be taken as a suggestion, for example, that *īmān* is twelve times as important as *islām*, far from it. It is worth noting, however, that the Qurʾān expresses itself more frequently in terms of faith than it does in terms of submission, even though the Qurʾān itself grants *islām* a supreme position as the name of the chosen religion of God (3 : 19).

In only a few instances is *ummah* used in close conjunction with *islām* or *īmān*, *muslim* or *muʾmin*, but when it is it is an important reference, as in 3 : 10:

Ye are the best community [*ummah*] that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe (*tuʾminūna*) in Allah. And if the People of the Scripture had believed (*āmana*) it had been better for them. Some of them are believers (*muʾminūn*); but most of them are evil-livers. (Pickthall).

Likewise, in 3 : 13, 14:

Of the People of the Scripture there is a staunch community [*ummat qāʾimat*] who recite the revelations of Allah in the night season, falling prostrate (before Him). They believe [*yuʾminūna*] in Allah and in the Last Day, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency, and vie with one another in good works. They are of the righteous (Pickthall).

The connection between faith and *ummah* is very strong in those passages in which *ummah* refers to the Muslim community; indeed it is an indispensable aspect of the true *ummah*. We can see that in the most developed usage of *ummah*, *islām* and *īmān* figure prominently, particularly regarding the covenant idea, as in e.g., 3 : 102, 103 (where *taqwā*, "reverential fear" is also prominent):

O ye who have believed [*āmanū*], fear [*attaqū*] Allah with the fear which is due to Him, and die not except as Moslems (*muslimūn*). And seek defence in the bond of Allah [*ḥabl allah*], and do not separate up; remember the goodness of Allah to you when ye were enemies; He knit you together and by His goodness ye became brethren...

36) Smith has based his statistics on Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī's *Al-muʿjam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, 1944), as have we.

This passage leads to a summation and climax:

And let there be formed of you a community [*ummah*] inviting to good, urging what is reputable and restraining from what is disreputable; such are the prosperous [*al-muflihūn*]. 3:104.

In the *ummah wasaṭ* passage, there is a dramatic linking of faith with the young community which had oriented itself to the old *qiblah* of Jerusalem in prayer, when perhaps the natural thing for Arabs would have been to face Mecca from the start.

Thus have We made you a community [*ummah*] in the middle [*wasāṭan*], that ye may be witnesses in regard to the people, and the messenger be in regard to you a witness.

We appointed the qiblah which thou hast been observing [i.e., Jerusalem] only that We might know those who would follow the messenger from those who would turn on their heels, though it was a big thing except to those whom Allah guided. But Allah was not one to let your faith [*īmān*] go lost; verily Allah is with the people gentle and compassionate. 2:143.

The "community in the middle" is a community of faithfulness. There could be no middle ground of witness without faith; and there could be no faith except by God's guidance (*illā 'alā-lladhina hadā-llāhu*).

One of the clearest connections between *ummah* and *islām* is 2:128:

O our Lord, make us to be submissive [*muslimaini*—dual, designating Abraham and Isaac] to Thee, and of our posterity a community submissive [*ummatan muslimatan*] to Thee, and show us our rites, and relent towards us...

This whole section reveals the independence of the Muslims from the other religious groups, especially the People of the Book:

When his Lord said to him [i.e., to Abraham]: 'Surrender thyself,' he said: 'I have surrendered myself to the Lord of the worlds.' And Abraham charged his sons therewith, and Jacob also: 'O my sons, Allah hath chosen the religion [*dīn*] for you, so die not without becoming submissive [*muslimūn*]. (2:131, 132).

Islām is sometimes thought of in terms of a formal, external act, lacking the depth and existential involvement of *īmān*. The following curious passage gives support to this view: (49:14, 15)

The Bedouin say, 'We believe (*āmannā*).' Say [Muhammad], unto them, 'You do not believe yet. Say rather, 'We have surrendered (*aslamna*), 'for the belief (*īmān*) has not permeated your hearts'... The [true] believers [*mu'munūn*] are those who believe in God and His Apostle, and afterwards never doubt, but struggle [*jahadū**] with their wealth and their lives in the way of God, these [only] are the faithful believers (*ṣādiq*).³⁷⁾

(* This alone added by us.)

37) Translation by Toshihiko Izutsu, in his *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), p. 189.

Izutsu distinguishes the kind of *islām* above as referring to the formula "I have surrendered," with *aslamtu* being the formal declaration of submission to the community.

What is implied seems to be simply that the fact of someone having joined the community of Muslims does not guarantee that he has 'belief' in the true sense of the word.³⁸⁾

The act of *islām* seems to be a human act, while *īmān* requires God's intervention and guidance, according to 49: 17, which follows the above-quoted passage concerning the Bedouin: "They think they oblige thee by their embracing Islam; Say: 'Do not think that you oblige me by your embracing Islam; no, God obligeth you by His guiding you to faith' (*īmān*) . . ." ³⁹⁾

The "surrender thyself" of 2: 131, 132, however, is another matter, as is that of 2: 128, "make us to be submissive to Thee," where *islām* is fully as important and weighty a concept as *īmān*. Concerning these closely related passages, Izutsu says:

The deep religious meaning of 'surrendering' comes out with utmost clarity. And, it should be remarked, the act of surrendering is immediately identified with 'the [true] religion.' We see that the surrender, far from being, as is suggested by LXIX . . . , a lukewarm and superficial sort of belief, or the first fumbling step in the faith, is the very foundation on which the whole religion of Islām is to be based.⁴⁰⁾

Muʾminūn is a technical term for Muhammad's followers from the very first period of the Prophet's appearance, according to Ringgren,⁴¹⁾ and very early *mūʾmin* and *muslim* alike are ranged in opposition to *kāfir* ("unbeliever") and *mushrik* ("idolater"), as well as *mujrim* ("sinner").⁴²⁾ *Kadhhaba*, "to consider false, give the lie to" is also used in opposition to *āmana* in many places. Significantly, *ṣaddaqa*, "to regard as true," is in Muhammad's earliest preaching used in the same way as *āmana*,⁴³⁾ which Ringgren feels means in the Qurʾān in the first place "not faith but belief in the sense of *Fürwahr*-

38) *Ibid.*, pp. 189, 90.

39) Translation by H. Ringgren, "Islam, ʾaslama and muslim," p. 31.

40) *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, pp. 190-91.

41) Helmer Ringgren, "The Conception of Faith in the Qurʾān," *Oriens*, IV (1951), p. 11.

42) *Ibid.*

43) *Ibid.*

halten,"⁴⁴) a kind of theoretical belief or assent to propositional truth, which is its meaning also in the translation of the Gospels into Arabic.

In this connection it may be of some interest to note that the close affinity of the verbs *ʿāmana* and *ṣaddaqa* is also brought out by the manner, in which the verb πιστεύω is translated in the Arabic translation of the Gospels. In Matthew and Mark this verb occurs 24 times; it is translated by *ʿāmana* in 15 cases, by *ṣaddaqa* in 7 cases, and in two cases by means of a paraphrase with *ʿāmanah*. It is obvious that the two Arabic verbs differ only slightly in meaning, which is proved *int. al.* by the fact that in Mark 11:31 we have *ʿāmana*, but in the quite similar passage Matt. 21:32 *ṣaddaqa* is used instead. Likewise, in Mark 11:23 ('if anyone says to this mountain ... and believes') we have *ṣaddaqa*, but in v. 24 ('All that you pray, believe and you shall receive') *ʿāmana*.⁴⁵)

But Ringgren cannot and does not limit *āmana* to a kind of assent to propositional and doctrinal truth, which would render it no more alive and religiously potent than the Bedouin *ʿaslama* of 49:14. He rightly adds

believing in the message of the prophet does not only mean considering the prophet as truthful, it means acknowledging the power or authority that is behind him, and yielding to it. Thus Mohammed's faith is no purely intellectual doctrine which appeals only to the reason of man. It is something more. Grimme, *Mohammed II: Einleitung in den Koran, System der koranischen Theologie* [Munster i.W.: 1895], pp. 118 ff, is right in defining faith as 'der Willensakt, sich bestimmte Lehrsätze so tief zu eigen zu machen, dass... das Herz darin ausruht'.⁴⁶)

There is no question that *āmana*, *īmān*, *mu'min*, etc., are axial terms and concepts in the Qurʾān, as are *ʿaslama*, *muslim*, *islām*. It is significant, as W. Cantwell Smith has pointed out, that the former complex is far more numerous in the text than the second; but this fact should not lead us to exaggerate the significance of the former terms in relation to *ʿaslama*, *islām*, *muslim*, for such a statistical criterion is erroneous. Surah 2:128, 131, 132 reminds us of the fundamental importance of *ʿaslama* and *muslim*, particularly in the crucial connection with Abraham the *ḥanīf* and the mature Qurʾānic concept of the *ummah*. *Ummah*, as has been demonstrated in our previous article, is not to be linked with *āmana* and *ʿaslama* in any necessary relation per se, but only in those passages which are clearly designations of Muhammad's people, the "best community," the "community in the middle."

44) *Ibid.*

45) *Ibid.*

46) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

The true religion is Islām and the true Ummah is an *ummah muslimah*. And *īmān* is a good deal more than assent to truth or *Fürwahrhalten*.

Muslimūn and *muʾminūn* occur in these human plural forms only in a fraction of their total instances in the combined forms in the Qurʾān. It is a characteristic of Qurʾānic style to make participial forms of many verbs and to apply these to groups of people acting and thinking in a great variety of ways. It should be noted that *muslim* and *muʾmin* are not essentially group terms, even in their human plural forms: they still are verbal forms and active (not reified as participles and gerundials become in English); nevertheless, as active expressions, or expressions of certain types of action and volition and mental motion, they do designate groups of people in significant ways. The *ummah muslimah* is not a "surrendered community," but a living human community which expresses its essential being through continuous submission and putting itself under God's Mercy and Providence.

The very nature of *āmana* and *ʾaslama*, when employed in the participial form in the human plural, however, makes them into special religio-communal terms, especially when seen in relation to *ummah* and its meanings, among which the very essence of *ummah* in the highest sense is to be submissive and the proper locus of submission is among a people in community, encompassing ideally the generations (2: 128). In later Muslim usage is the term identifying the Caliph as *Amīr al-muʾminīn*, the Commander of the Faithful, where *al-muʾminīn* means not just faithful people, but the faithful people of *the faith: al-islām*. There is something mildly ironical about calling the "faith" by the term *islām*. But there is no contradiction here (although the question of whether *Fürwahrhalten* might be applied to *islām*: whether one submits-to-believe-in-submitting, *aslama*→*āmana*→*islām*, is an intriguing one, especially when it is admitted, as it must be, that *islām* and *īmān* are not so simply distinguished in certain respects), but rather a mutuality and interpenetration which is understood more readily on the level of religious psychology than on that of logic.

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My Goodness towards you, and have approved Islam as your religion. 5:3.

There is no true *islām* without *īmān*, as may be seen in the many contexts where some form of *āmana* specifies the state of mind and

soul required of the one who would obey God truly. But there is no *īmān* without *islām* either; and at their fullest, the two concepts are inextricably linked and mutually confirmatory.

It is possible to take numerous other words and, because they occur in participial forms in the plural, or because they indicate ranges of thought and activity which might shed light on how true members of the Ummah behave, multiply this list of religio-communal terms. No good purpose would be served, however, by this procedure beyond compiling a statistical list. The "Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names of Allah" (*al-ʿasmāʾ al-ḥusnā*) reflects this approach to a certain extent,⁴⁷ but it is motivated by piety and important doctrinal considerations. Instead of seeking to be exhaustive here, and in order to avoid making connections which are really not too significant (as may easily happen when one becomes too interested in multiplying word studies), this article will limit itself to just a few more prominent terms and concepts beyond the ones which have been considered thus far.

In addition to *aslama*, *āmana/islām*, *īmān/muslim*, *muʾmin* are a group of terms of the *ʿabada* family, meaning "to serve, to worship, be a slave or servant of." The human plural forms *ʿābidūn*, *ʿibād* and *ʿabid*, as well as the singular verbal noun *ʿabd* appear frequently, as do the regular verbal forms. This word does not always designate the followers of Muhammad's message (e.g., 23 : 47 "servile ones"; 21 : 53, "worshippers of images"; and the very interesting Surah 109 in which both *kāfirūn* and *muslimūn* are designated as *ʿābidūn*, though not with respect to the same ultimate). The form *ʿibāda*, "worship," which occurs only nine times, nevertheless is a centrally important key Qurʾānic term for piety and devotion as well as for theological reflection on the divine-human relationship. Man is called in the Qurʾān not only to *islām* and *īmān*, but also to *ʿibāda*, to "worship" and "adoration." Whether this is the primitive meaning of *ʿabada* in Arabic (the root is common to all Semitic languages), or it came from the Hebrew צָבַד, "to work," from which "to serve" was derived,⁴⁸ the term in

47) Cf. Louis Gardet, "*Al-ʿasmāʾ al-ḥusnā*," *Encyclopedia of Islām*, Second Edition, s.v.; and the exhaustive discussion and listing by J. W. Redhouse, "On the Most Comely Names *الاسماء الحسنی*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XII (1880), pp. 1-69, where over five-hundred names are mentioned.

48) Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān*, p. 210.

its Qurʾānic usage includes the two notions of worship and service, in a manner which recalls the Latin *opus Dei*. God is *rabb*, "Lord," and man, His creation, is *ʿabd*, "adoring servant." The title *ʿabd*, followed by the name of a god is very common from pre-Islamic times in North and South Arabian inscriptions,⁴⁹ e.g., *ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān*, in South Arabia. The Qurʾān, however, was to give this commonly known and used word a special place of prominence in Islām; and it would henceforth not be used in connection with other gods.

Say: "I am only a human being like yourselves to whom it is suggested that your god is One God; so whoever looks forward to the meeting with his Lord, let him work righteous work, and let him not give a share of the service of his Lord [*ʿibādati rabbihi*] to anyone [sc., 'else']" (18: 110).

Notice how the work idea is wedded to worship and service, making clearer the mutual cohesion of work and worship under the One Lord. Another passage in which this association is evident is 19: 65:

Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them; so serve Him [*faʿbudhu*], and endure patiently in His service [*waṣṭabir li ʿibādatihi*]; knowest thou to him a namesake?

ʿIbāda is the worship of the "submitters" (*al-muslimūn*) who at the same time view themselves in their proper subordinate relationship as servants and workers, as *ʿābidūn*. The muslim does not submit only; he *works* in this position perfecting and deepening his *islām*, and through *ṣabr*, "steadfastness," anticipates the guidance into firm faith (*bal allāhu yamunnu ʿalaikum ʿan hadākum lilimāni ʿin kuntum sādiqīn*: "but Allah bestows a favour upon you by having guided you to belief, if ye are speaking sincerely." 49: 17)

How do the "servants" behave in this world, especially toward other people?

The servants of the Merciful are those who walk humbly upon the earth, and, when the ignorant address them, say: 'Peace.' Who spend the night (in prayer) [like the *ummah qāʾimah* of 3: 113] to their Lord prostrating themselves or standing; Who say: 'O our Lord, turn from us the punishment of Gehenna; bad is it as a (final) habitation and a place to remain. Who when they contribute are neither extravagant nor stingy, but between the two he is right [*wa kāna baina dhālika gawāman*]; Who call not upon another god along with Allah, and kill not a person whom Allah hath forbidden (to be killed), except with justification; and do not commit fornication; ... (25: 63).

49) *Ibid.*

Allah recognizes His servants, the Qurʾān reminds over and over: *wa allāhu baṣīr^ubi-l-ʿibād* (3 : 15; 3 : 20; 40 : 44, etc.). God's servants will taste the joys of Paradise (eg., 43 : 68; 89 : 29). Abraham, who as we have seen is the prime exemplar of the Muslim man, is referred to as one of the "believing servants" (37 : 111); likewise, Noah (37 : 81), Moses, Aaron and Elias (37 : 122, 132). Only "single-minded slaves of Allah" (*ʿibād allāhi mukhlīṣīn*) will be saved from the Doom, like Elias, who is also referred to in this passage as "one of Our believing servants" (*ʿinnahu min ʿibādīnā l-muʾminīn*) (37 : 128, 132). Iblīs, representing the seductive powers of evil, has no hold over the perfectly devoted servants of God (15 : 42).

Other terms which help specify and describe the godly people in the Qurʾānic view are *ḥamidūn*, "those who praise" (in this form in 9 : 112 only); *shākīrūn*, "the thankful" or "thanksgivers" (6 : 53 and frequently); and a number of others, especially *mukhlīṣūn*, which although it does not appear frequently, is a strong term, as it specifies the quality of faith, submission, servanthood as being "pure, sincere." The name of Surah 112 is *al-ikhhlāṣ*, meaning "sincerity in religion." This title, according to Bell, prefaces "an emphatic statement of the uniqueness and unity of Allah,"⁵⁰ which this last real sūrah of the Qurʾān expresses (the final two "sūrahs" are prayers or charms called the *muʿawwidhatān*); "Say: 'He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not anyone.'" (Arberry)

In 2 : 139 is a sharp statement of the absolute monotheism in the concept of *ikhhlāṣ*, particularly distinguishing the Qurʾānic idea of religion from that of the People of the Book. After the interesting *sibghah* passage there follows:

Say (thou) : 'Do ye dispute with us in regard to Allah, though He is our Lord as well as yours; we have our works and ye have yours, and we make (religion) entirely His [*wa nahnu lahu mukhlīṣīn*] ...

In 40 : 65, and other places, the same idea of "making religion pure" for Allah alone is expressed. The servants, the muslims, the believers all practice *ikhhlāṣ*. *Mukhlāṣ* is several times used to describe *ʿibād*, "servants" (e.g., 14 : 40; 37 : 40, 74, 128, 160, 169; 38 : 83) in the form *illā ʿibādallāh al-mukhlāṣīn*.

See then of what nature was the latter end of those who were warned. *Except the servants of Allah single-hearted* (37 : 74).

⁵⁰) Bell, *The Qurʾān Translated*, p. 685.

Other terms, some frequent in occurrence, which either mean or are related to human groups, but which have no intrinsic religious meaning are: *qawm* (very frequent, meaning “people, nation”); *aṣḥāb* (frequent, and may refer to the godly or the ungodly, as in 11 : 23: *aṣḥāb al-jannat*—“the companions” or “inhabitants of the Garden” and 5 : 29: *aṣḥāb an-nār*: “inhabitants of the Fire”); *fiʾah* (“band or party of men, army”); *ḥizb* (“party”; *ḥizb allāh* appears in 5 : 56; 58 : 22); *ṭāʾifah* “part, people, company or band of men”); *fariq* (“party, band of men”); *nās* (“people, man, mankind,” very frequent); *āl* (“people, race, family”); *qabīla* (“tribe”); *fauj* (“troop, company”); ‘*abnā*’, *banū*, etc. (this term, meaning “sons, children,” often occurs in the Qurʾān either with Israel or Adam, though it is used in other connections, too). The terms *muhājirūn*, “emmigrants,” and *anṣār*, “helpers,” do have a strong Muslim dimension. Other group terms, which are religious, because they designate actual historical traditions are: *naṣāra* (“Christians”—14 occurrences, all Medinan); *al-yahūd* (“the Jews”—8 times, all Medinan); *banū Isrāʾīl* (41 occurrences, Meccan and Medinan); *raḥbān* (“monks”—4 times, all Medinan); *ahl al-kitāb* (“People of the Book”—many times, Meccan and Medinan); *ahl adh-dhikr* (“people of the remembrance”—16 : 43); *ahl al-injīl* (“people of the Gospel”—5 : 57); *ṣābiʾūn* (“Sabeans”—5 : 69; 2 : 62; 22 : 17); *mājūs* (“Magians”—22 : 17 only); *rabbāniyyūn* (“rabbis”—5 : 44, 63; 3 : 79); *aḥbār* (“teachers, rabbis”—5 : 44, 63; 9 : 34).⁵¹) There is no necessity for carrying out a full-scale examination and discussion of these terms in this place. There are some interesting and important aspects to some of them, but here it is sufficient to point them out and show how numerous the Qurʾān’s sociological and religio-communal terms in fact are. The Qurʾān, indeed, is rather preoccupied with such terms and concepts, as it seeks to establish the identity and integrity of the Ummah in the ongoing religious and socio-political history of its region.

It should perhaps be noted that *shaʿb*, “people,” nowhere appears in the Qurʾān other than in 49 : 13, and *waṭan*, “homeland” appears not at all. The most conspicuous absence, however, is surely *jamāʿah*,

51) See Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, pp. 63-64. Also, see the same author’s *Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms reprint, 1964; first published in the Hebrew Union College *Annual*, Vol. II, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1924), pp. 200-201.

for it soon became an extremely important synonym for *ummah*. The *j-m*-^c radicals do appear in the Qurʾān, though not as frequently as might be expected. They are never limited in their meaning to religio-communal topics and acts, the closest they come to such meaning being in 42 : 7; 54 : 45 and 64 : 9, where the gathering of people to final judgement is meant. Although *jamāʿah* does not appear in the Qurʾān, it does have an early use, as may be seen in Ibn Saʿd, along with *ḥizb allāh*, in place of *ummah*, to designate the Islamic community after Mecca had finally been incorporated, by which time *ummah* is no longer used either in the Qurʾān or in the treaties which were being concluded.⁵²⁾

An official term was perhaps unnecessary, since diplomacy was carried out in the name of God and Muhammad.⁵³⁾

Jamāʿah is the most important Islamic religio-communal term to be non-Qurʾānic. *Dār al-Islām* does not occur either, although *dār* does in some contexts which will be discussed in the following section (as it is a soteriological term designating an abode, e.g., *dār as-salām*, 6 : 127; 10 : 25). *ʿAṣabiyya*, the term which Ibn Khaldūn recognized as the key concept in the history and achievement of the Arabs, does not appear (although the concept certainly does).⁵⁴⁾

There is a large collection of terms by which the Qurʾān designates the attitudes and behavior of groups in a religiously significant manner, but *negatively*, that is by terms which are contrary, by and large, to those which we have considered thus far in the discussion. The terms which stand out most prominently are *kāfir-ūn/kuffār*, from *kufr* ("ungratefulness, unbelief"—very frequent); *mushrik-ūn, shurakāʾ*, from *shirk* ("association, polytheism"—frequent); *mukadhdhibūn*, from *takdhīb, kadhdhaba* ("give the lie to," "declare as false"—frequent); *munāfiqūn* ("hypocrites"—frequent); *ḍallūn* ("Those astray, in error"—see *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*); *mutakabbirūn* ("arrogant"), and many more. Analysis of these terms has been done often enough in the past and does not need to be repeated in this place,⁵⁵⁾ except to

52) W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 247.

53) *Ibid.*

54) For an illuminating discussion of terms which do not appear in the Qurʾān, but might be expected to do so, see R. Brunschvig, "Simple remarques négatives sur le vocabulaire du Coran," *Studia Islamica*, V (1956), pp. 19-32.

55) Stimulating recent discussions include Daud Rahbar's *God of Justice: A Study in the Ethical Doctrine of the Qurʾān* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960) and

emphasize that the Qurʾān is never content to present ungodly thinking and behavior in abstract, technical terms only; most of the time individuals and groups of people are designated, thus indicating again the Qurʾān's keen interest in the sociological as well as the theological.

III. The Covenant Idea in the Qurʾān

The covenant idea, so common in Semitic religion, is a central aspect of the Qurʾānic message, too. The Ummah, in the strongest sense, which means the Muslims, is a covenant community similar to the covenant peoples who had preceded, especially the Jews and Christians. Faithful upholding of established covenants, treaties and contracts was not a Qurʾānic innovation, either as a practice or an ideal, because it was a deep-seated aspect of pre-Islamic Arabian life and custom.⁵⁶⁾ One of the most prevalent and important terms concerning agreements between individuals and groups, whether for secular or spiritual reasons, is *wafāʾ*, "to fulfill, be faithful to."

He who *proves faithful* to his covenant escapes blame, and he whose heart aims at the calmness of integrity will never have to falter.⁵⁷⁾

Islam took the old *wafāʾ* ideal and continued applying it both in social relationships among believers, and in the religious sphere of relations between man and God. *Wafāʾ* had in pre-Islamic times been a matter of faithfulness and loyalty among tribal, blood relations. It also pertained to inter-tribal agreements. The Islamic *ummah*, which came to break down the solidarity of Arab tribal tradition,⁵⁸⁾ as it kept peoples apart in the Arabian Peninsula as much as it helped them live and cooperate together (with the exception of such super-tribal confedera-

Toshihiko Izutsu's two studies, referred to previously in this article. For an exhaustive summary of all the human groupings in the Qurʾān, together with the names and titles applied to them, see Dirk Bakker, *Man in the Qurʾān* (Amsterdam: Academisch Proefschrift, Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, 1965), Chapter III, "Man and His Fellow Men."

56) See J. Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl Trübner, 1914).

57) Zuhayr, as quoted in Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, p. 87, italics ours.

58) The founding of the Ummah of Islam did not do away with the Arab tribal system—far from it; but it did seek to incorporate it into a larger synthesis. Cf. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 239 ff., where the Ummah is characterized as a kind of tribe itself; also, cf. Bakker, *Man in the Qurʾān*, pp. 187-190.

tions as the *ḥilf al-fuḍūl*, which Muhammad had admired),⁵⁹) put a great value on *wafāʾ* in the social and religious spheres. *Wafāʾ* was transformed by Muhammad into something "super-tribal, truly human." 60)

O ye who have believed, fulfill contracts [*ʿawfū bi-l-ʿuqūd*]. 5:1.

Fulfill the covenant of Allah when ye have taken it, and do not violate oaths after their confirmation, and your having set Allah as guarantor over you; assuredly Allah knoweth what ye do. 16:91.

In the Old Testament is found the classical form of the covenant in the Abrahamic tradition, the Mosaic covenant (important also is the Covenant with Abraham, which came before and promised a great people to arise from the Patriarch's posterity), which was between Yahweh and the Children of Israel as a whole, expressed in the simplest manner in the formula: "I will be your God, and you shall be My people."

God is the initiator of His covenant with Israel, and this fact is emphasized in the Qurʾān.

Recall when We delivered you from the family of Pharaoh, who were laying upon you the evil of punishment, slaughtering your sons, and saving your women alive; in that was a mighty trial from your Lord. When We divided the sea with you and delivered you, while We drowned the people of Pharaoh before your eyes. (2:49, 50).

Every covenant requires two parties (at least). In the Mosaic Covenant, Yahweh promised to be the God of Israel, to "love them, deliver them, guide them to salvation, with all that is implied by 'being the God of a people'." 61)

O Children of Israel, remember the good which I bestowed on you; fulfill My covenant [*ʿawfū bi-ʿahdī*] and I shall fulfill your covenant [*ʿuḍī bi-ʿahdī-kum*]; so to Me give reverence. (2:40).

The promise of Allah! Allah does not fail of His promise, but most of the people do not know. (30:5).

59) Cf. the articles "*ḥilf*" by E. Tyan and "*ḥilf al-fuḍūl*" by Charles Pellat, *Encyclopedia of Islām*, Second Edition, s.v. — *The ḥilf al-fuḍūl* was a confederation or rather pact among several Qurayshi clans which guaranteed unity for mutual aid and assistance "like a single hand with the oppressed and against the oppressor," and was acceptable to the Prophet to the degree that he said "If I were invited to [agree to it] now that we are in Islam, I would accept willingly." Nevertheless, a *ḥadīth* says: "There is no *ḥilf* in Islam"; all tribal distinctions were to be dissolved, ideally, in the Muslim Ummah.

60) Tyan, *ibid*.

61) Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, p. 88.

Many times is the covenant between Israel and God referred to in the Qurʾān (e.g., 2 : 40, 80, 83, 84; 5 : 12, 70; 7 : 134, 169; 4 : 154, 155; 20 : 86). In 2 : 83, the Qurʾān records its rehearsal of the Sinai Covenant in a manner, which if not complete and directly dependent on the Biblical text, is a kind of impressionistic recollection of the Decalogue of Exodus 20 : 2-17:

When we made a covenant with the Children of Israel: 'Ye shall not serve (any god) but Allah; to parents (show) kindness, and to the near relative, the orphan and the poor; speak good to the people; observe the prayer and pay the Zakāt...

Although Moses is the dominant human actor in the Sinaitic drama, it is always clear that he is representing the Children of Israel, and that the basic relationship is between God and the community. In the Qurʾān, something different is transmitted, for there God's covenant is always firstly with His messengers, and then *through them* with the peoples in question, whether Israel, the Christians or the Muslims. This "covenant with the prophets" is set forth in several passages.

(Recall) when We took from the prophets their pledge [*mīthāqahum*]*—and from thee, and from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary; We took from them a firm pledge.* (33 : 7).

(Recall) when Allah took the covenant [*mīthāq*] of the prophets: 'Whatever Book and Wisdom I may have given you and there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, ye shall believe him and help him'... (3 : 81).

God reveals Himself to His messengers (21 : 25), provides them with His aid (40 : 51; and in 10 : 103 a promise of salvation to His messengers and believers), grants His guidance (*hudan*; 6 : 90; 19 : 58), and gives them His message itself (37 : 171). The prophets undertake their vocations and, with the expectation of opposition, firmly endure until Judgement Day, when it will be evident that God and His messengers have triumphed (58 : 21; 36 : 52).⁶²

They say: 'Oh, alas, for us, who hath raised us up from our resting place?' This is what the Merciful promised, and truthful have been the envoys. (36 : 52).

The Qurʾān contains several terms pertaining to the concept of covenant. Two which may be translated "covenant" are *ʿahd* and

⁶² This paragraph is based on Arthur Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture* (New York: Russell F. Moore Co., 1952), p. 31. This work was originally published under the same title in the *Muslim World*, XL (1950), pp. 41-55; 106-134; 185-206; 257-275.

mīthāq, both of which have been mentioned already in this discussion in quoted passages. Both had a history of secular use, but were easily adapted by Muhammad to the purposes of the new religion.

Mithāq is from *wathīqa*, "to place one's confidence" in someone, which in the third form means "to enter into a compact or treaty" with anyone. Thus *mīthāq* means "treaty" or "covenant." The Qurʾān employs this term in its secular sense in e.g., 4 : 21, referring to the replacing of one wife for another and the problem of whether a man who does so should be permitted to retrieve his marriage-price.

How can ye take it seeing ye have come together, one with the other, and they have accepted from you a firm compact [*mīthāqan ghalīẓan*]?"

But most often, and in the technical sense which this study is examining, this term concerns the agreement between man and God, or rather, as Jeffery has pointed out, in connection with messengers and their communities.⁶³⁾ The majority of instances refer to the Christians and the People of the Book. All communities which have had a covenant have concluded them strictly speaking through their prophets, for God's *mīthāq* is, as has been said, technically with the messengers in the first place and through them with their communities. Surah 33 : 7 lists Muhammad in the prophetic succession, so he is included in the *mīthāq* of the prophets and through him his followers, the Muslims.

What is the matter with you not believing in Allah when the messenger is calling you to believe in your Lord, and He hath taken your covenant if ye are believers? (57 : 8).

Louis Gardet has compared the Hebrew *berith* with the Qurʾānic covenant (*ʿahd* and *mīthāq*) and argues that the two concepts are different in an important way, that the Hebrew concept is

en somme synallagmatique, véritable échange d'obligations mutuelles fondé sur la libre préférence de Dieu pour son peuple, et l'adhésion de ce dernier, le contrat de l'Islām, plus universaliste, reste unilatéral, les conditions en sont unilatéralement fixées par Dieu a son creature. Et tandis que toute l'alliance du Dieu de la Bible et de son peuple n'est que la redite inlassable d'un même thème d'amour qui transparait sans les rigueurs de la Loi, le rachat des prévaricateurs qui restent les bien-aimés, et se situe dans le perspective toujours, d'une nouvelle Alliance qui sera celle du Messie médiateur et sauveur, ce n'est ni de rachat ni le méditation qu'il s'agit en Islām. La condition (*shart*) du contrat, pour reprendre un terme technique du droit

63) *Ibid.*, p. 32.

musulman, est la confession par la créature de l'absolue unicité et transcendance de son Seigneur.⁶⁴⁾

Dirk Bakker agrees with Gardet's interpretation of the covenant relation in the two traditions.⁶⁵⁾ Adding the testimony of 2 Samuel 7 : 14 ff., with respect to the Royal House of David, Bakker says that the fundamental concept *chesed* "involves that God will meet His obligations of the covenant even if the human partner is disloyal . . . So the difference is to be reduced to a difference in the idea of God."⁶⁶⁾

It does appear to be the case that God in the Qurʾān and subsequently in the Islamic tradition (especially of Sunnism) is portrayed and worshipped as absolutely one, holy, transcendent and sovereign to a degree unsurpassed and rarely matched in the Biblical tradition. Bakker is quite correct, therefore, in pointing out a difference in the idea of God. But both Gardet and Bakker seem to be saying two things, thus confusing the immediate issue of the nature of covenant in the Hebrew and Islamic traditions: that the Biblical covenant is a mutual agreement between God and man in which both parties have both rights and duties whereas in the Qurʾānic concept the relation is one-sided, with God possessing all the rights and man all the duties. The reason for this supposed difference is traced by Gardet and Bakker to the redemptive character of God's love in the Hebrew context which, lacking in the Qurʾānic record, puts the Muslims on an inferior plane with respect to God, relative to the Children of Israel.

It is not correct to argue from the doctrine of God's love in the Biblical tradition to deny mutuality between God and man in the Qurʾānic covenant idea. While love may be the tie that binds in a contract or covenant, businessmen, statesmen and even prophets know that mutual rights and duties clearly spelled out must, together with sanctions and guarantees, be at the center of concern. Textually, it is palpably false, as will be seen in the following citations which include evidence of mutuality. In terms of religious psychology the awesome transcendence and sovereignty of God have not made the *ʿābidūn* of the Ummah in any way abject and humble in this world, but on the contrary have, because of the clear sense that Muhammad's People are

64) Louis Gardet, *La cité musulmane*. "Études Musulmanes," Vol. I, 3rd ed., revised (Paris: Vrin, 1969), pp. 54, 5.

65) Bakker, *Man in the Qurʾān*, p. 137, n. 25.

66) *Ibid.*

also God's People in a way that cannot fail, together with a native robustness and independence in the crucial formative years of Islam, produced a civilization marked by serene authority and optimism.

The character of the Divine-human relationship is admittedly different in the two traditions, and the deep dimension of forgiving love for the covenant breakers in the Biblical record is definitive and profound for the Jewish and Christian traditions, particularly the latter. But there is forgiveness and mutuality, two-sidedness, a "synallagmatisme" in the Qur'ānic covenant idea which may be seen, for example, in 2 : 40, which to be sure is a reference to the Jews, but is clearly meant, in typical Qur'ānic fashion, to apply more generally to Muhammad's situation as well.

O Children of Israel, remember the good which I bestowed on you; fulfill My covenant [ʿawfū bi ʿahdī] and I shall fulfill your covenant; so to Me give reverence.

Again, in 9 : 75, 6, concerning the unbelievers and the hypocrites:

Some of them make a covenant with Allah [ʿāhada Allāh]: 'If He giveth us of His bounty, we will certainly give *ṣadaqa* (voluntary contributions), and will be of those who are upright.'

Then when He hath given them of His bounty, they become niggardly with it and turn away, averting themselves. 67)

It is difficult to understand how one can maintain a position that sees one-sidedness in the Qur'ānic covenant idea unless he is willing to admit the same of the Biblical record. The fact is that in each tradition the covenant is one of mutuality, but in neither are the partners ever equal. God is Lord of Israel and He is Lord of the Ummah, and in His will is the final reckoning in both. In each tradition He is awesomely just and at the same time sublimely compassionate, although He expresses His love and forgiveness in different ways and to different extents. Throughout the melancholy history of the *ummahs* of mankind, God has sought a people who would be true to their covenants and faithful and good; not a people who would simply lie down and be abject slaves of the Almighty, but one who would see their service (*ʿibāda*) as the opportunity for the only authentic existence possible

67) Cf. 47 : 7 — "O ye who have believed, if ye help Allah He will help you, and set firm your feet." Professor Fazlur Rahman has suggested that this crucial section could be rendered as follows: "If you help God (i.e., to help you), He will help you." Personal communication.

in this world and the next. The Qurʾān (3 : 193-5) presents God's own vision of His true believers and their situation in history:

O our Lord, we have heard one summoning to belief (saying): 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed.

O our Lord, forgive us our sins and expiate from us our evil deeds, and unite us in death with the pure.

O our Lord, give us also what Thou hast promised us on (the assurance of) thy messengers, and abase us not on the day of resurrection; verily Thou wilt not fail the appointment.

Then their Lord responded to them: 'I shall not let the work of anyone of you go to waste, whether male or female, ye belong to each other [or, 'you are both the same' concerning this: *baʿdakum min baʿḍin*]. Those who have emigrated, have been expelled from their dwellings, have suffered annoyance [too trivial; 'hurt' or 'molestation' would be better for *ʿādhū* here] in My cause, have fought and been killed—from them I shall expiate their evil deeds, and cause them to enter Gardens through which the rivers flow'; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is the best of the reward.

It would be easy to multiply examples of how the Qurʾānic covenant concept entails mutual conditions and responsibilities. The point has been made, we feel, that Gardet's and Bakker's distinction is problematical, while it contains significant insight (though in this connection misapplied), concerning the nature of God expressed in the two traditions, particularly with respect to love and power.⁶⁸⁾

68) Gerhard von Rad has addressed this problem in his *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I (trans.) D. M. G. Stalker (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 129: "Our word 'covenant' is only a makeshift rendering of the Hebrew word... A great advance was made when Begrich ["Berit," ZAW, 1944, p. 1 ff.] showed that the 'covenant' is to be understood as a relationship between two parties of unequal status. In no sense, then, is a relationship of parity as between the partners always presupposed. The 'covenant' is often an agreement *imposed* by a superior on an inferior (Josh. IX:6 ff; I Kings XX:34; I Sam. XI:1 ff). Complete freedom of action, and therefore the freedom to decide, that is, to take the oath or not, is in this case presupposed by the superior — the lesser partner is *simply the recipient*. This arrangement is to be understood on the assumption that the recipient will certainly not act against his own interest, for by rejecting the covenant he would only exchange a protection which was to his advantage for an extremely hazardous legal insecurity." (Italics ours.)

J. Pedersen, in an analysis of *ʿahd* (*Der Eid bei den Semiten*, p. 8) has said, concerning the mutuality question, that in some (although not all) of the Qurʾānic passages concerned, "Sind dann die Menschen subjekt, so ist je nachdem mit 'Recht' oder 'Pflicht' wiederzugeben; ist Allah subjekt, mit 'Forderung' oder 'Zusage'." He adds that, concerning man's rights, the Qurʾān does not provide for much. But enough is present to show a clear mutuality of rights and duties, however unequal, on *both* sides, without suggesting that the basic relationship is anything resembling even approximate parity (the same is true of the Bible.) — Of course the big question in this comparative discussion is not one

The other major term for covenant in the Qurʾān is *ʿahd*, as has been mentioned already and exhibited in citations. This term is related to *ʿahida*, “to enjoin,” “to stipulate,” which in the third form is used to “make a covenant with.”⁶⁹) It may refer to covenants among men (2 : 177; 3 : 76; 23 : 8; 13 : 20; 17 : 34; 70 : 32), to Muhammad’s compacts with his contemporaries (33 : 15, 23; 2 : 100; 9 : 12), and to covenants between men and God (19 : 78, 87), in which cases the term comes to take on a technical “religious rather than secular sense.”⁷⁰) Interestingly, Allah fulfils covenants in which even the polytheists are provided with rights, as in 9 : 7:

How shall the polytheists have a covenant [*ʿahd*] with Allah and with His messenger? except those with whom ye have made covenants at the Sacred Mosque [e.g., the Kaʿbah⁷¹)]; as long as they act straight with you, act straight with them; verily Allah loveth those who show piety.

ʿAhd, like *mīthāq*, when used in the technical sense of a covenant between man and God, designates “the covenant relation entered into by communities with Allah through the messages sent to them by the messengers.”⁷²) The Book, then, is itself a kind of covenant which, in the form of a message brought by a chosen messenger, contains the promises, demands and obligations of contract. In the book idea there is the strong sense of God’s living Word actually being present and operative in and for the Community.⁷³)

Another term, which strictly speaking does not mean “covenant,” but which is closely connected with the concept, is *bayʿa*, “oath of allegiance.” This term is well-known from pre-Islamic Arabia as the

of parity in either case, but of basic reciprocity, which is crucial in both the Biblical and Qurʾānic covenant theologies. It is true that the character of the reciprocity is different in the two traditions, but the operational reality of reciprocity is evident in each.

69) In this discussion of *ʿahd* we have followed closely Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture*, pp. 32, 3.

70) *Ibid.*

71) For a significant analysis of sacred places and sanctuaries connected with prophets and holy people, see R. B. Serjeant, “Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia,” *Mélanges Taha Hussein*, ed. Abdurrahman Badawi (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1962), pp. 41-48.

72) Jeffery, *The Qurʾān as Scripture*, p. 32.

73) Also, the so-called “Constitution of Medina,” not found in the Qurʾān, but clearly a contemporary document, is called a “*kitāb*,” that is, a “written document” containing the articles of the important agreement which Muhammad and the peoples of Medina entered into after the Hijrah.

formal act of swearing allegiance to a leader and in Islamic history as the official recognition of the Caliphs. The root with which this word is traditionally thought to be related is *bāʿa*, “to sell” and it does seem to be principally connected with selling, bargaining and business transactions. Bell translates *bayʿa* as “bargain” in 9 : 111:

And who fulfills his covenant (*ʿahd*) better than Allah? So rejoice in the bargain (*bayʿa*) you have made with Him.

E. Tyan disagrees with the traditional etymology and avers that

The *bayʿa* owes its names to the physical gesture itself which, in ancient Arab custom, symbolized the conclusion of an agreement between two persons and which consisted of a hand-clasp (cf., the *manumissio* of the ancient law of certain Western countries...). The physical gesture was termed *bayʿa* because, precisely, it consisted of a movement of the hand and arms (*bāʿ*). And since the election of a chief (and the undertaking to submit to his authority) was demonstrated by a hand-clasp, it was naturally described by the very term which denoted this gesture.⁷⁴⁾

M. M. Bravmann rejects Tyan’s interpretation in favor of the traditional one concerning commercial transactions and contracts, which he traces back to very early Arab and south Semitic society in general.⁷⁵⁾ The etymological argument need not be rehearsed here, but the general nature of the concept has been described clearly by Bravmann:

An essential feature of the agreement named *bayʿah* is that both parties to the agreement—the person of power and authority as well as the person (or persons) of lower standing—are mutually bound to fulfill the agreement, and the agreement entails for both parties duties and obligations as well as privileges and rights. We deal here with a reciprocal relationship.⁷⁶⁾

In 48 : 10 is a dramatic use of *bayʿa*, referring to the oath of allegiance of the Muslims after the Treaty of Hudaibiya:

Verily those who swear allegiance to thee [*yubayyʿūnak*] swear allegiance really to Allah, the hand of Allah is above their hands; so whoever breaks faith, to his own hurt he breaks it, and to those who fulfill what they have pledged [*ʿāhada*] to Allah, He will one day give a mighty reward.

74) Article “*Bayʿa*,” *Encyclopedia of Islām*, Second Edition, s.v.

75) M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam: Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), Chapter V, “*Bayʿah* ‘Homage’: a Proto-Arab (South-Semitic) Concept,” pp. 213-219; this article first appeared in *Der Islam*, 45: 3 (1969), p. 301 ff.

76) *Ibid.*

Further on in 48 : 18 is an indication of how Allah fulfills His responsibility:

Allah was satisfied with the believers, when they were swearing allegiance to thee under the tree, and knew what was in their hearts, so He hath sent down the Assurance [*as-Sakina*] upon them and hath recompensed them with a clearing up near at hand.

The hand gesture, which Tyan argues is the essence of *bayʿa*, appears in 48 : 10, with God Himself seemingly holding His hand over the hands of the believers and the Prophet (with whom the oath is consummated, significantly), thus personally consecrating the oath. Whether Tyan's or Bravmann's etymology is the correct one does not obscure the powerful symbolism of this passage,⁷⁷) which depicts the close covenant association with Allah, whereby even if technically the Prophet is mediator, the meaning clearly is that through his office the people are united in what is finally a direct relationship with God.

The interesting "Bond with the Women" (*bayʿat an-nisāʾi*) of 60 : 12 can only be mentioned here by saying that it occurred, as Gertrude H. Stern has suggested, "in order to give a more formal aspect to their [the Meccan women's] conversion and to make solemn confession of their belief in one God and their allegiance to Muhammad as His Apostle, as also to include their acceptance of His ordinances."⁷⁸)

It is significant that the Qurʾān in 33 : 35 is very specific in its language both in the enumeration of the required virtues of the covenant people of Islām as well as the clear statement that both sexes are equally included, as is shown by the unusual distinction into separate

77) Mention should also be made of the recent etymological essay by Frithiof Rundgren, "Zur arabischen Wortkunde II," "1. *bayʿa* 'Huldigungseid'," *Orientalia Suecana*, XXI (1972), pp. 53-59, in which the author takes issue with Bravmann and comes out with a qualified support of Tyan, but basing his conclusions on other grounds, which due to their technical nature cannot be conveniently summarized in this place, and which do not materially affect this discussion in any case.

78) "Muhammad's Bond with the Women," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, X (1940-42), p. 185. Also, cf. F. Buhl, "Zur Koranexegese," *Acta Orientalia*, III (1924), p. 102, where the author argues that this *bayʿa* and all the covenants of the Qurʾān, in fact, reflect not a formalized, once-for-all covenant ceremony with strictly structured elements (contra H. Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, p. 148 ff.), but a more informal and ad hoc practice which was designed to admit new converts into the community.

genders, and not the normal subsuming of both male and female under the masculine plural.

The self-surrendering men [*al-muslimūn*] and the self-surrendering women [*al-muslimāt*],
 the believing men [*al-muʾminūn*] and the believing women [*al-muʾmināt*],
 the obedient men [*al-qānitūn*] and the obedient women [*al-qānitāt*, etc.],
 the truthful men and the truthful women,
 the enduring men and the enduring women,
 the submissive men and the submissive women,
 the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women,
 the fasting men and the fasting women,
 the continent men and the continent women,
 the Allah-remembering men and the Allah-remembering women,
 for them Allah hath prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward.

Another term etymologically linked with *īmān*, which was employed as a mark of the covenant bond in the Qurʾān is *ʾamāna*. In 33 : 72 we read

Verily We offered the trust [*al-ʾamāna*] to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and shrank from it, and man bore it; verily he has become affected with wrongdoing and ignorance.

This word occurs but six times: in 2 : 283 as “pledge”, referring to a secular kind of witnessing; in 4 : 58 it means “deposits” in a secular sense, as surety; the other three uses are religious: 8 : 27—“O ye who believe! Betray not Allah and His messenger, nor knowingly betray your trusts” (Pickthall); 23 : 8—“And who are shepherds of their pledge [*ʾamānatahum*] and their covenant [*ʿahdahum*] . . . (Pickthall); and 70 : 32—“And those who keep their pledges [*ʾamānatahum*] and their covenant [*ʿahdahum*] . . . will dwell in gardens honoured” (Pickthall).

33 : 72 is a puzzling passage (see above). Alessandro Bausani⁷⁹) compares it with a Nupe myth concerning life and its responsibilities. Paret suggests that *al-ʾamāna* refers to the good of life, rather than the good of salvation,⁸⁰) perhaps implying that the passage means that life in its fulness is a treasure the holding and cherishing of which demand responsible stewardship on the part of mankind. But man greedily and unthinkingly accepted it graspingly, when it was proffered.

79) Cited in R. Paret, *Der Koran*: II: *Kommentar und Konkordanz*, p. 402, from the Introduction of *Il Corano*, translated and with commentary and notes by Alessandro Bausani (Florence: Sansoni, 1961), p. lxiii.

80) *Ibid.*

Here is portended a central dimension of the Muslim view of man. 2 : 30 is similar:

(Recall) when thy Lord said to the angels: 'Lo I am going to place a live-gerent in the earth.' They said: 'Wilt thou place in it one who will work corruption and shed blood? We sing hymns in Thy praise and ascribe holiness unto Thee.' He replied: 'I know what ye know not.'

The story of God's teaching the names of the animals to Adam follows the preceding passage (in the Bible, Adam himself named the animals). Ibn Khaldūn, in reference to the passage just quoted, has said: "This is the meaning of civilization."⁸¹) These two passages (33 : 72 and 2 : 30) are exceedingly important for a proper understanding of the covenant idea in the Qurʾān, for they reveal a dimension of human responsibility and potential initiative which is easily lost sight of when the "servant-slave" aspect of man under God is emphasized, as it often is. God is still God and man no more than His limited and mortal creature and worshipper, but on the broad stage of history from the creation, man is invited, even before he is "ready" for it, to enroll in a kind of pedagogical process, through which he might create a human life and order, if he is able, which properly reflects and complements the gracious and abundant natural order which God has provided, and which contains the many signs (ʿāyāt) for those who can see.

The Qurʾān is the quickening center and charter of the covenant people, the *ummah wasaʿ* and *muslimah*, who preserve the trust, the ʿamāna, which man, unknowingly accepting in the beginning, strives now to understand and master. The angels must sing praises to God, while humans are invited to create history, knowledge and culture, and to know both the anguish and the transcending joy of suspension between God's beginning and ending of the drama. The Muslims, who have received the *Sakīnah* and the *Furqān*, the Assurance and the Criterion, however, have the knowledge in their hearts of God's purposeful working in the historical process in their behalf. The greatest good in covenantal community life is the peace which is established, maintained and celebrated.

The servants of the Merciful are those who walk humbly upon the earth, and, when the ignorant address them, say: 'Peace' (25:63).

⁸¹) *Al-Muqaddimah*, 3 Vols., tr. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), I, p. 85; cited in Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Qurʾān* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 177, n. 3.

J. Pedersen has expressed this dimension of covenant life in the Bible thus

The peace entered upon between human beings consists in *mutual confidence*; *shālōm* is the full manifestation of the soul, and if souls are united, then their *shālōm* consists in their acting together for the common prosperity.⁸²⁾

The peace of God is found in the covenant bond of the Ummah and God in the Qurʾān, too, in the *ḥabl Allāh* of 3 : 103.

And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable [*ḥabl*] of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's Favour unto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. (Pickthall).

The *dār as-salām*, the "abode of peace" (6 : 127; 10 : 25), is a term which refers perhaps primarily to the after-life of the saved, in the Garden. But it also conveys a sense of entering that state in the present life as Muslims under God's guidance. The *ummah muslimah* is the *dār as-salām* in the proleptic sense of providing a foretaste of Paradise in covenant with God in this world. The Ummah, in this sense, is very much an eschatological community, calling the world to salvation and providing an earnest of that final fulfillment in a godly common life of peace and submission and service in the world of history.

This is the path of the Lord straightly—We have made the signs distinct for a people who let themselves be reminded. For them is the abode of peace [*dār as-salām*] with their Lord and He is their patron for the works they have been doing. (6 : 126, 27).

82) J. Pedersen, *Israel: its Life and Culture*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Oxford University Press, 1926; reprint ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 287.

DER MODERNE NORDAMERIKANISCHE TOTENKULT ALS RELIGIONSGESCHICHTLICHES PROBLEM¹⁾

VON

HANS-PETER HASENFRATZ

Zürich, Schweiz

„Was ist das Leben? Es ist das plötzliche Aufglühen eines Leuchtkäfers in der Nacht. Es ist der Hauch eines Büffels im Winter. Es ist der kleine Schatten, der über das Gras gleitet und sich im Sonnenuntergang verliert.“

Crowfoot (s.u. N 57)

I. Der Amerikaner und seine Toten

1. Die Amerikaner geben mehr für ihre Toten aus als für die höhere Bildung ihrer Jugend. Genauer: für die Bestattung von 1,7 Mio. Toten rollten im Jahre 1960 laut Statistik mehr Dollars, als die persönlichen Aufwendungen für höhere Bildung von 3,6 Mio. Studenten an Universitäten und Oberschulen ausmachten²⁾. Paradoxerweise scheint aber den modernen Amerikaner überhaupt kein Rapport mehr an seine Verstorbenen zu binden; „der Verstorbene ist plötzlich verschwunden, man spricht nicht von ihm, ja es ist taktlos, dies zu tun, man benimmt sich so, als wäre er nie gewesen“³⁾. Die dem Amerikaner geläufigste Bezeichnung für „sterben“ ist diesem Tatbestand deshalb völlig adäquat: „to pass on“ („to pass over“)⁴⁾ — fortgehen (vorbei-

1) Jessica Mitford, *Der Tod als Geschäft...*, 1965 (die dt. Ausg. ist gegenüber dem Original, *The American Way of Death*, 2.A. 1963, stark überarbeitet, weshalb hier vorzugsweise die später erschienene Uebers. herangezogen ist), spricht von „einem neuen Totenkult, den weder Religion noch menschliche Vernunft rechtfertigen“ (217). Ärzteschaft und Kirchen nennen das moderne nordamerikanische Totenritual „barbarisch“ bzw. „heidnisch“ (ibid., 258, 240, 253). Es wäre allerdings noch abzuklären, ob die Beziehungen der sog. Heiden und Barbaren zu ihren Toten ebenso „heidnisch“ und „barbarisch“ sind wie die der modernen Amerikaner!

2) Ibid., 39 (hier weiteres statistisches Material), vgl. auch 67.

3) Konrad Lorenz, *Die acht Todsünden der zivilisierten Menschheit*, 5.A. 1973, 47.

4) Cf. Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One, An Anglo-American Tragedy*, 1.A. 1948, Ndr. 1969, 49 u. passim.

passieren) ⁵⁾, letztlich eben einfach klanglos verschwinden. Dabei ist ein Verstorbener in den US nicht einfach ein „Leichnam“ oder „Toter“, sondern wird pietätvoll (oder euphemistisch) „the Loved One“ ⁶⁾ geheissen: der Liebe.

Nun gilt bei vielen sog. *primitiven* Völkern das Verbot, einen Verstorbenen weiterhin mit seinem Namen zu erwähnen ⁷⁾, denn eine Namensnennung würde den Toten wieder herbeizitieren, was nicht oder zumindest nicht immer erwünscht ist. Warum aber spricht der moderne Amerikaner nicht mehr aus, was seiner Meinung nach ohnehin nicht länger existent, schlicht weg („passed on“) ist? Und wie kann er seinen „Lieben“ lieben (oder wenigstens fürchten), wenn jeglicher Bezug als Voraussetzung offenbar fehlt?

2. Die amerikanische Totenpflege ist hoch entwickelt. Einbalsamierung des Leichnams ist die Regel — auch bei nachfolgender Kremation ⁸⁾. Die Balsamierung zielt darauf, der Leiche „ein lebens-echtes, natürliches Aussehen zu schaffen und zu erhalten“ ⁹⁾, ein „Aussehen wie im *Leben*“ herbeizuzaubern ¹⁰⁾. Demselben Zweck gilt die kosmetische Nachbehandlung des „Loved One“ ¹¹⁾, das „paint-

5) Bei Muret-Sanders, Enzyklopädisches englisch-deutsches und deutsch-englisches Wörterbuch..., Teil I, 1910, s.vv., ist die Nebenbedeutung „sterben“ für „to pass on“/„to pass over“ noch gar nicht aufgeführt, offenbar auch noch nicht in Gebrauch.

6) So lautet auch der Titel des Romans von Waugh. Der grosse britische Satiriker war während eines Aufenthalts in Hollywood (vgl. den Titel der dt. Ausg., Tod in Hollywood, Roman, 1950) kurz nach dem 2. Weltkrieg durch einen australischen Freund in die Welt von Forest Lawn Cemetery eingeführt worden (so „Preface“ u. Klappentext, die er getreu und erschütternd parodiert. Forest Lawn Memorial-Park in Los Angeles ist das grösste Bestattungsunternehmen in den USA, „behandelt“ im Jahr über 6'000 Leichen und darf als das Zentrum des amerikanischen Totenkults gelten. Dazu Mitford, Tod als G., 55, 161ff.

7) Hubert Gundolf, Totenkult und Jenseitsglaube, 1.A. 1967, 46, 154; Fridtjof Nansen, Eskimoleben, 1921, 204ff., auch 220.

8) Mitford, Tod als G., 177; Waugh, Loved One, 38. — Die b. Mitford, 69ff., detailliert mitgeteilte Prozedur des Einbalsamierens erinnert lebhaft an die „klassische“ Schilderung ägyptischer Mumifizierungspraktiken b. Herodot 2, 86ff.

9) So ein von Mitford, Tod als G., 84, zitiertes Lehrbuch über die „Grundsätze und Praktiken des Einbalsamierens“. Hervorhebung von mir.

10) Ibid., 237 (Hervorhebung von mir), vgl. auch 73-74, (219) 239, 245u.

11) Über die Arbeit in den „enbalming-rooms“ und „cosmetic rooms“ vgl. auch Waugh, Loved One, chap. iv, überhaupt chap. iii-vi.

ing" 12). Wenn immer möglich wird eine Photographie des Lebenden bei der sog. schöpferischen Neugestaltung der Persönlichkeit („in re-creating personality“) des Verbliebenen zugezogen 13). So können individuelle Züge des Lebenden getreu am Toten porträtiert („portrayed“) werden: man steckt ihm die geliebte Pfeife in den Mund, befestigt das Monokel auf der Nase, gibt ihm sein Musikinstrument in die Hände 14). Bestattungsfirmen verfügen auch über eine eigene Schneiderei 15), um den Toten für die Lebenden gesellschaftsfähig herrichten zu können — „to make him presentable“ 16). Der Verstorbene präsentiert sich den Beschauern in Abendtoilette, eine Tote gern im Hochzeitskleid 17). Die Pose 18) der Leiche beim „leave-taking“, der Abschiedsparty mit den Hinterbliebenen im eigens ausgestaffierten Salon (dem „Slumber Room“), soll jedenfalls den lebenden Menschen darstellen, wie man ihn in seinen besten Zeiten gekannt hat: *blühend lebendig* („in buoyant life“), etwa auf ein Sofa lässig hingestreckt 19), neuerdings auch an einem Tisch sitzend, die Tasse in der Hand, wozu die Trauergesellschaft Kaffee trinkt 20). Spezielle Trauerartikel schenken auch dem Bestatteten 21) das Gefühl wohligen Behagens. Da gibt es Grabschuhe mit „weicher, gepolsterter Sohle und einem warmen bequemen Slipper-Komfort, dennoch von echter Schuheleganz“. Sie zeugen von „Rücksicht und Aufmerksamkeit gegenüber dem lieben Dahingeschiedenen“. Da gibt es den post-mortem-Büha, überhaupt den vollständigen p.-m.-Set von Dessous. 22) Und da gibt es endlich Metallsärge mit einem „verstellbaren Weichschaumbett“ 23).

12) Ibid., 72u. Offensichtlich sind Wortentlehnungen aus dem Bereich der Kunst beliebt. Vgl. auch unten N 18.

13) Ibid., 48.

14) 48f.

15) 41f.

16) 41.

17) 43, 76.

18) „(the) pose“, „posing“ ibid., 42, 48, 57, 60.

19) 42-44.

20) Bericht von Frau Dr. Elisabeth Ross-Kübler (Verfasserin der unten N 34 genannten Bücher), Vom Kranksein auf den Tod, Vortrag an der ETH Zürich, 24.9.1974.

21) Über Gräfte, Krypten, Mausoleen, Bronzeplatten u.a. s. Mitford, Tod als G., 133ff. Eine gute Gruft gilt als „symbolischer Ausdruck der Liebe“ (61).

22) Ibid., 57 (Druckfehler!).

23) 59.

All diese Momente moderner nordamerikanischer Totenpflege sind auch im Verhalten „*primitiver*“ Gemeinschaften aufweisbar ²⁴⁾ — aufs Aeussere gesehen. So glaubte man im alten Aegypten, dass der tote König im Jenseits weiterhin seine Kräfte für das Wohl seines Volkes und Landes einsetzen könne ²⁵⁾. Diese „Kräfte“ sind aber an die Unversehrtheit körperlicher Existenz gebunden vorgestellt ²⁶⁾. Darum musste die Gemeinschaft an der dauerhaften Erhaltung des toten Körpers vital interessiert sein. Wo man der Person des Toten solche oder ähnliche Funktionen offensichtlich nicht mehr zuschreibt, ist die Konservierung des Leibes („re-creating personality“ !) ein befremdliches Unternehmen. In vielen archaischen Kulturen besteht Mahlgemeinschaft zwischen Lebenden und Toten ²⁷⁾. Gemeinsames Mahl ist Sakrament und stiftet unter den Teilnehmern tiefe Bindungen ²⁸⁾. Gemeinsame Mahlzeiten zwischen Lebenden und Toten sind deshalb Ausdruck vitaler Verbundenheit von Zurückgebliebenen und Abgeschiedenen. Was aber soll eine derartige Veranstaltung (s.o. bei N 20), wo dieses Band fehlt und schon gar nicht erwünscht ist? Endlich müssen nach archaischem Verständnis die Toten mit dem, was sie bedürfen, versehen werden, will man nicht riskieren, dass sie zurückkommen und die Lebenden behelligen oder ihnen zumindest ihren Beistand in vielerlei Dingen verärgert vorenthalten ²⁹⁾. Junge Mädchen, die *unverheiratet* sterben mussten, kleidet man gern als

24) Gute kurze Zusammenfassung gibt Sigmund Mowinckel, *Religion und Kultus*, 1953, 66f.; Karl Frölich, *Germanisches Totenrecht und Totenbrauchtum im Spiegel neuerer Forschung*, Hess. Bl. f. Volkskunde 43, 1952, 54ff.; auch Zvi Rudy, *Ethnosozologie sowjetischer Völker*, 1962, 190. Vgl. Gundolf, *Totenkult*, 12-14.

25) Gundolf, *Totenkult*, 81 (auch 79).

26) Siehe G. van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, 2.A. 1956, 322: Den alten Aegyptern galt auch der Leib, *ḳt* als Seelenmacht, die zusammen mit weiteren Seelenkräften — *ka* (Doppelgänger) (325), *ba* (Seelenvogel) (331), *śhm* (Szeptermacht) (24) u.a. — erwähnt wird.

27) So nimmt etwa an der Beninküste der Tote, auf einer Matte liegend, am Trauermahl teil. Gundolf, *Totenkult*, 139. Und bei den „mythisch-politischen“ Festen des Inkareiches waren den Malkis, den festlich geschmückten Mumien der Ahnen, zur Seite des Herrschers an der Fürstentafel Plätze reserviert. Siegfried Huber, *Im Reich der Inkas*, 1951, 215f., auch 121f.

28) Leeuw, *Phänomenologie*, 408.

29) Die tote Melitta weigert sich, ihrem Mann anzuzeigen, wo eine Summe gesuchten Geldes hinterlegt wurde, denn sie sei nackt und friere. Man hatte unterlassen, ihre Kleider ins postmortale Dasein mitzugeben. Als das Versäumnis in gebührender Weise nachgeholt wird, stellt sie ihr Wissen zur Verfügung. Herodot 5, 92 a.E.

Bräute ein und entschädigt sie so im Grab für unausgelebte Ansprüche an das Leben und die Lebenden ³⁰). Was aber, wenn den Verstorbenen solche Ansprüche an die Welt der Lebenden gar nicht mehr zugetraut werden — zumal wenn man verstorbene *Ehefrauen* im Brautkleid präsentiert (s.o. bei N 17)?

3. Die formale Übereinstimmung bei gleichzeitigem Verlust von Sinnhaftigkeit im Vergleich mit „primitiver“ Totenpflege geben dem modernen „American Way of Death“ ³¹) etwas Zwanghaftes, Neurotisches, Vershobenes und Vershrobenes, Per-verses ³²). Wo aber (kollektive) neurotische Zwänge herrschen, da wirkt (kollektive) *Verdrängung* mit. Allein, was wird hier verdrängt? Ein Indiz gibt uns das krampfhaftes Bemühen amerikanischer Leichenpflege, den Toten so wieder herzurichten („re-creating personality“!), wie er in der Blütezeit seines *Lebens* („in buoyant life“!) war ³³). Offenbar soll der Tod gerade da aus dem Spiel manövriert werden, wo sein Sieg am augenfälligsten ist. Welch besessenes Unterfangen!

II. *Der Amerikaner und der Tod*

1. In Amerika wird der Tod verdrängt. Darüber kann uns auch die Flut von Literatur nicht hinwegtäuschen, welche dieser Tage zum Thema Tod und Sterben vom westlichen Kontinent her auf uns losbrandet ³⁴). Im Gegenteil: die hektische Überfülle signalisiert geradezu den Defekt ³⁵).

³⁰) Diese sog. Totenhochzeit z.B. noch um die Jahrhundertwende in Rumänien allgemein Brauch. Gundolf, Totenkult, 195.

³¹) So ja auch der Titel des mutigen Buches von Mitford, die den modernen nordamerikanischen Totenkult zum ersten Mal umfassend beschreibt.

³²) Es gehört zum guten Ton, Entzücken über das „hübsche Aussehen“ des (wie oben Ziff. 2) aufgetakelten Leichnams zu äussern. Lorenz, Todsünden, 47. Siehe auch unten Ziff. II 4 a.E.

³³) Dazu dient auch das Hochzeitskleid an verstorbenen Ehefrauen. Siehe oben Ziff. 2 b. N 17 und a.E.

³⁴) Etwa: M. K. Bowers/E. N. Jackson u.a., Wie können wir Sterbenden beistehen, 1971; B. G. Glaser/A. Strauss, Interaktion mit Sterbenden, Beobachtungen für Aerzte, Schwestern, Seelsorger und Angehörige, 1974; E. Kübler-Ross, Interviews mit Sterbenden, 7.A. 1973; dies., Was können wir noch tun? Antworten auf Fragen nach Sterben und Tod, 1.A. 1974; zu den amerikanischen Originalen vgl. auch die Zusammenfassung v. Albrecht Peters über den „Tod in der neueren theologischen Anthropologie“, ZSTh 14, 1972, 29ff.

³⁵) Über dieses Gesetz in der Psychologie Arno Plack, Die Gesellschaft und das Böse, 4.A. 1969, 63, 193.

2. Der Amerikaner hat es fertiggebracht, Vokabular, das an der Todessphäre partizipiert, systematisch durch *noas*³⁶⁾ zu ersetzen (s.a. oben Ziff. I) und zu entschärfen. Ein *Totenschein* wird derart zum „form of *vital statistics*“³⁷⁾, also zur *Lebensbescheinigung*. Der Totenpfleger (Leichenpräparator und -kosmetiker) avanciert zum „Dermachirurgen“³⁸⁾ und der Bestattungsunternehmer zum „Schmerz-Therapeuten“ („grief therapist“)³⁹⁾. Den Leichenwagen hat man sprachlich zur „Speziallimousine“ aufpoliert: zur „professional coach“⁴⁰⁾.

3. Wo Wörter verfemt sind, geht es der damit benannten Tatsache natürlich in unserm Fall nicht besser. Das Betreten von Kliniken — und wär's zum Besuch eines todkranken Elternteils! — bleibt Jugendlichen unter 16 Jahren strikte versagt⁴²⁾. Das *blühende junge Leben* soll nicht mit dem Fluidum des Todes in Berührung kommen — was nicht hindert, dass dieselben Kinder zwischen ihrem 5. und 14. Lebensjahr zu Haus vor dem Bildschirm durchschnittlich 13.000mal die Tötung eines Menschen ansehen durften⁴³⁾! Zwischen diesem wahrhaft besessenen Überangebot und jenem widersinnigen Verbot besteht ein tiefenpsychologischer Zusammenhang: es sind Formen der Verdrängung. Und jede Besessenheit ist letztlich ein Symptom des Mangels⁴⁴⁾.

36) Mario Pei, *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology*, 1.A. 1966, Ndr. 1969, s.v. „*noa word*“: ein machtschwaches und tabufreies Wort, das ein mächtiges und tabuiertes ersetzt.

37) Joseph Mannheim, *Das abstossende Geschäft mit dem Tod*, Tages-Anzeiger (Zürich) 72/11, 1964, TA 7, 2, 1.

38) Mitford, *Tod als G.*, 70; *Am. Way of D.*, 39: „dermasurgeon“.

39) Mannheim, a.a.O.

40) Ibid. Die Vokabel figuriert (wie auch die andern) in keinem der mir zugänglichen einschlägigen Wörterbücher. Die Bedeutung ist aber klar: „coach“, ein Amerikanismus, meint die Limousine (E. Muret/D. Sanders/O. Springer, *Langenscheidts Enzyklopädisches Wörterbuch der englischen und deutschen Sprache*, Teil I, 1. Bd., 1.A. 1962, s.v.); über „professional“ gibt Mitford, *Tod als G.*, 225, Aufschluss (der Nationale Verband der Beerdigungsunternehmer in den US kämpft für die offizielle Aufnahme des Gewerbes unter die Spezial- und Fachberufe, der Leichenbestatter will als Spezialist, Fachmann gelten — eben als „professional“).

41) Weitere Euphemismen b. Mitford, *Tod als G.*, 13, 80ff., 221ff.

42) Bericht von Frau Dr. Ross (s.o. N 20).

43) So eine dpa-Meldung, *Badische Zeitung* (Freiburg i.Br.) 28/16, 1973, 7, 3.

44) Fast wörtlich n. Plack, *Ges. u. B.*, 193. Man denke an die sog. Sexwelle: Sexbesessenheit ist, triebpsychologisch bewertet, nur eine Form von Sexverdrängung. Oder an die Sportbesessenheit unserer Zeit: Symptom für die Unterdrückung des Bewegungstriebes in einer Auto-Kultur (dazu *ibid.*, 184ff.).

Brauchen wir noch zu erwähnen, dass die amerikanischen Leichenwagen (mit Verlaub: die Speziallimousinen!) unter solchen Zwängen nicht nur ihren Namen, sondern ihren Anstrich wechseln mussten ⁴⁵⁾? Beliebt scheint Hellgrün zu sein, die uralte *Symbolfarbe der Jugend*, des Eros und der Vegetation ⁴⁶⁾. Weiter hat in einem extrem todverdrängenden Klima der Hinterbliebene und Trauernde keinen anerkannten Status wie noch in archaischen Gesellschaftsformationen und muss darum den Halt der Gemeinschaft gerade da entbehren, wo er ihn am dringendsten benötigte ⁴⁷⁾. Der Trauernde macht eben in seiner eigenen Person der Umgebung sichtbar, was sie geflissentlich verdrängt, und Mittrauer hiesse Partizipation an der (verdrängten) Faktizität des Todes.

4. Wie gerade die Verdrängung des Todes in krankhaften Totenkult ausartet, kann auch die sog. kryonische Bewegung illustrieren ⁴⁸⁾. Sie bezweckt, um es mit den Worten ihres Initiators Robert C. W. Ettinger ⁴⁹⁾ zu sagen, Tote gefrierlagern und dann wieder auftauen zu lassen, wenn „der medizinische Fortschritt ihre Heilung erlauben oder die Unsterblichkeit allgemein verbreitet sein würde“ ⁵⁰⁾. Das bedingt eine ausserordentlich kostspielige Totenpflege. Sofort nach Eintritt des klinischen Todes wird das Blut des „Patienten“ durch eine Glyzerinflüssigkeit ersetzt ⁵¹⁾ zum Schutz der Zellen vor Eiskristallbildung. Das weitere Prozedere mit der Leiche: Einhüllen in Aluminiumfolie und vorläufige Aufbewahrung in einem sargähnlichen Trockeneis-Container (bei -79 Grad C), später endgültige Einlagerung in eine kryonische Ruhestätte, wo die „Toten auf Abruf“ in Behältern

45) Mitford, Tod als G., (11) 79.

46) Werner Danckert, Unehrlische Leute, Die verfeimten Berufe, 1063, 150ff. (u. passim).

47) Vgl. Klaus Dirschauer, Der totgeschwiegene Tod, Theologische Aspekte der kirchlichen Bestattung, 1973, 21 bei u. mit N 30. Die Feststellung gilt nicht nur, allerdings ganz besonders für amerikanische Verhältnisse.

48) Über Geschichte, Ziel und Aktivität der Bewegung vgl. den ausführlichen Bericht von Clifton D. Bryant/William E. Snizek, Überleben als Eiskonserven, TA-Magazin (Zürich) Nr. 14, 1974, 19ff.

49) Sein Buch, The Prospect of Immortality, zuerst 1962, hatte 1965 in New York zur Bildung einer Gesellschaft für Kryonik geführt. Bryant/Snizek, Überleben, 19, 1f.

50) Bryant/Snizek, a.a.O., 19, 1.

51) Man beachte die Ähnlichkeit mit der „normalen“ amerikanischen Balsamierungspraxis (Mitford, Tod als G., 72: Ersetzen des Blutes des „Loved One“ durch Chemikalien)!

mit flüssigem Stickstoff (bei -196 Grad, Temperatur, bei der Molekularbewegung und damit Zellveränderung aufhören) konserviert bleiben. ⁵²⁾ Eine Anhängerin der Bewegung schildert „das Gefühl der Erhebung, mit dem sie der Einkapselung ihres Vaters beigewohnt hatte: er habe genau wie in ihrer Erinnerung ausgesehen“. Ein anderer, der die beträchtliche Summe für die Gefrierlagerung seiner Mutter investierte, erklärt, „er... fühle sich immer wieder glücklich, wenn er die Sommersprossen seiner Mutter unter ihrem Make-up sehe; sie trage ein Purpurkleid und Schmuck“. ⁵³⁾ Todesverdrängung hat hier in ritualisierten Totenkult umgeschlagen — in Perversion.

5. Wie kommt es zur kollektiven, epidemischen *Verdrängung des Todes* (was etwas durchaus anderes ist als die kreatürliche *Furcht vor dem Tod*) durch eine ganze Kultur? Eine knappe Antwort muss billigerweise hier gewagt werden, obwohl die Fragestellung an sich den Rahmen der Religionsgeschichte sprengt. Offenbar hängt die kollektive Wertung des Todes durch eine Gesellschaft von den in ihr geltenden Wertvorstellungen, von ihrer spezifischen „Hierarchie der Werte“ ab. Dann wird aber in einer extremen Leistungs- und „Konkurrenzgesellschaft“ ⁵⁴⁾ wie der amerikanischen, die den Erfolg als obersten Wert ⁵⁵⁾ setzen muss, um funktionieren zu können, der Tod notwendigerweise als absoluter „Un-Wert“ dämonisiert werden. Denn der Tod ist die äusserste Form der Defizienz, letztlich der grösste Misserfolg ⁵⁶⁾. Wo aber der Tod durch eine Gesellschaft ausgedrängt

52) Das Prozedere b. Bryant/Snizek, *Überleben*, 20,1, beschrieben.

53) Ibid., 22,3. Bei der ersten Anführung musste aus syntaktischen Gründen die Interpunktion leicht abgeändert werden. — Vgl. auch oben N 32.

54) Dazu Plack, *Ges. u. B.*, 42ff. — Siehe auch unten N 56 Mitte.

55) Ibid., 53ff.

56) Mitford, *Tod als G.*, 80. Waugh, *Loved One*, 64, lässt deshalb einen Slogan in den „Whispering Glades“, d.i. Forest Lawn Cemetery (s.o. N 6), den Tod euphemistisch als „grössten Erfolg“ verkünden („the greatest success story of all time“, „the success that waits for all us whatever the disappointments of our earthly lives“). Waugh hat überhaupt den Konnex zwischen Misserfolg und Tod, der für die amerikanische „world of competition“ (32) zur Identitätsbeziehung geworden ist, dichterisch genau erfasst. In chap. ii berichtet er, wie ein Chefdrehbuchautor bei der „Megalopolitan“-Filmgesellschaft nach 25 Jahren Dienst gefeuert wird, weil ihm zu einem bestimmten Sujet nichts einfallen will — und weil er einen jungen Landsmann in seinem Haus als Untermieter duldet, der in der Bestattungsbranche tätig ist. Er partizipiert dadurch gleichsam zweifach am Bereich des Todes (durch seinen Misserfolg und seinen Untermieter) und muss ausgeschieden werden.

wird, da wird der Mensch in seiner Kreatürlichkeit nicht mehr ernst genommen⁵⁷⁾: da wird *der Mensch* nicht mehr ernst genommen, da wird *das Leben* nicht mehr ernst genommen⁵⁸⁾. Da wird das Leben unmenschlich, und da wird der Tod unmenschlich. Eines der Gesichter⁵⁹⁾ dieses unmenschlich gewordenen Todes ist der neurotisch zwanghafte und besessene Totenkult, den wir oben (Ziff. 4 u. Ziff. I) beschrieben haben⁶⁰⁾. Dieser Totenkult ist deshalb als unmenschlich und widersinnig anzusehen, weil seine Grundlage nicht das vitale Band zwischen Lebenden und Toten bildet, das für archaische Gemeinschaften konstitutiv ist — sondern dessen radikale Zerschneidung durch das Verdrängen der Vitalsphäre des Todes. (Wenn vorhin das Wort „widersinnig“ fiel, so aus *religionsgeschichtlicher* Sicht; vom *psychologischen* Standpunkt ist neurotisches Verhalten durchaus sinnvoll, wenngleich krankhaft.) Diese vitalen Bindungen zwischen Lebenden und Toten als ein Konstitutivum „primitiver“ Gesellschaften

57) Dazu Plack, Ges. u. B., 60ff. u. passim. — Ein tiefes Wissen um die Kreatürlichkeit menschlicher Existenz liegt in den letzten Worten (unser Motto a.A.) von Crowfoot, dem Sprecher des Bundes der Schwarzfussindianer, im Apr. 1890 (hier n. der Übers. b. Hermann Boeschstein, „Die Weissen werden zu uns kommen...“, Kanadas Indianer und Eskimos im Kampf ums Überleben, TA-Magazin Nr. 35, 1974, 35).

58) Siehe Nikolai Berdiajew, Von der Bestimmung des Menschen, 1935, 335: „Das Leben in dieser Welt hat nur Sinn, weil in dieser Welt Tod ist; wenn kein Tod in unserem Leben wäre, so hätte auch das Leben keinen Sinn.“ Ähnlich Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 7.A. 1953, § 46-53: Der Tod ist eigenste, unüberholbare Seinsmöglichkeit, seine „Verdrängung“ entfremdet das Dasein seinem eigensten Seinkönnen. Vgl. auch Gundolf, Totenkult, 10: Der Mensch ist das einzige Lebewesen, das weiss, dass es sterben muss (phylogenetisch); die Kindheit eines Menschen endet in dem Augenblick, da für ihn der Tod Realität wird (ontogenetisch).

59) Zum anderen s.o. Ziff. 3 b. N 43.

60) Dass hinter dem modernen amerikanischen Totenkult, der in der Welt seinesgleichen sucht, zunächst einmal ganz einfach das skrupellose Management einer mächtigen Lobby von Bestattungsunternehmern steckt, hat Mitford, Tod als G., glänzend und mutig entlarvt (vgl. auch Mannheim, Geschäft m. d. T.). Die eigentliche Ursache aber, warum sich ein ganzes Volk so widerstandslos hineinmanipulieren liess und lässt, dürfte in der kollektiven Verdrängung der Vitalsphäre des Todes zu suchen sein. (Zum Problem vgl. auch J.-E. Meyer, Tod und Neurose, 1973.) — Das amerikanische Bestattungswesen (besser: -wesen) macht sich übrigens auch schon in Europa bemerkbar (Dirschauer, Totg. Tod, 21 N 28 m. Lit.; für den Einfluss auf England s. Mitford, Am. Way of D., chap. v, das in der dt. Ausg. fehlt), wobei natürlich dieselben Ursachen im Spiel sind.

und ein Aspekt religiösen Sozialverhaltens⁶¹⁾ sollen im folgenden kurz beschrieben werden, wozu uns ein notwendiger Exkurs ohnehin Anlass gibt.

6. Verdrängung und Substitution — am Beispiel altiranischen Totenkults

Neurotische Verdrängung der Vitalsphäre des Todes hat im heutigen Nordamerika einen zwanghaften und widersinnigen Totenkult induziert. Von diesem Tatbestand ist ein anderer, religionsgeschichtlicher Tatbestand streng zu scheiden: die Verdrängung, *Substitution*⁶²⁾ eines bestimmten Totenkultes durch einen anderen unter dem Einfluss der veränderten religiösen Gesamtsituation in einer Gemeinschaft. Das „neue“ Verhältnis zu den Toten kann dabei ausgesprochen zwanghafte Züge zeigen durch seine kramphafte Abwehrstellung gegen ein „altes“ — ist gewissermassen Anti-Kult oder Totenkult mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen —, bleibt aber durchaus sinnvoll (in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht), zumal der Vitalbezug zwischen Lebenden und Toten dadurch nicht abbrechen muss, sondern nur seine Ausdrucksformen ändert. Am Beispiel des *altiranischen Totenkults* soll das noch etwas verdeutlicht werden, weil mit Substitutionsvorgängen und ihren Folgen in der Religionsgeschichte natürlich immer zu rechnen ist.

Gewisse Stämme im *vorzarathrustrischen* Iran hatten eine ausgesprochen „leibhafte“ Beziehung zu ihren Toten. Die Toten waren die Schützer⁶³⁾ der Lebenden. Sie erhalten das Leben, indem sie im Kampf beschützen, die Frauen gebären und die Pflanzen wachsen lassen⁶⁴⁾. Sie werden nachts angerufen⁶⁵⁾. Besonders die Männer-

61) Eben die *Beziehungen* zu seinen Toten unterscheiden den Menschen vom Tier. Ihr Nachweis dient dem Paläontologen und Vorgeschichtler geradezu als „Leitfossil“ zur Bestimmung der Art „Homo sapiens“. Vgl. Gundolf, Totenkult, 14. Die Implikation spielt, wohlverstanden, nur in *einer* Richtung: Nachweis von Totenkult ist immer zugleich Nachweis menschlicher „Kultur“, während Fehl-anzeige für Totenkult diese nicht auszuschliessen braucht.

62) Der Ausdruck n. Mircea Eliade, Die Religionen und das Heilige, Elemente der Religionsgeschichte, 1954, passim (s.a. Sachregister, s.v.).

63) Fravašay- (f.) < fra- („vor-“, „ver-“) + var- („wehr“-en) + ti- (Abstraktsuffix), also: Schutz, Beschützer. Roland G. Kent, Old Persian, Grammar, Texts, Lexicon, AOS 33, 2.A. 1953, Ndr. 1961, 198,2; 197,2; 206,2.

64) Ganzes Fravartin Yašt (Yt. 13).

65) Y. 1,6 (dazu s. Index b. Fritz Wolff, Avesta, Die heiligen Bücher der Parsen..., Ndr. 1924, s.v. „Tagesabteilungsgötter“). Auf Friedhöfen: V. 7, 54ff; in Höhlen (?): V. 3, 10.22.

bünde pflegten ihren Kult in nächtlichen orgiastischen Feiern ⁶⁶⁾, wobei wohl rituelle Nacktheit ⁶⁷⁾ und sexuelle Freizügigkeit ⁶⁸⁾ wichtiges Element bildeten und das Ausgraben von Leichen und das Kochen und Verzehren von Leichenteilen praktiziert wurden ⁶⁹⁾. Durch das Essen von Leichen(teilen) bekommt der Kultteilnehmer Teil an den fruchtbarmachenden Kräften (s. Orgie!) der Toten und an der Vitalsphäre ihres chthonischen Elements, bleiben die Toten andererseits in die Kultgemeinschaft (oder den Stamm) im wörtlichen Sinne inkorporiert ⁷⁰⁾. Die sog. *Zarathustrische Reformation* ändert das Bild. Während die „Seele“ des Verstorbenen nach seinen Taten gerichtet vorgestellt wird ⁷¹⁾, denkt man sich den toten *Körper* durch ein dämonisches Wesen, die Leichenhexe ⁷²⁾, infiziert und dadurch dem höchsten Grad von ansteckender Unreinheit verfallen ⁷³⁾. Ein immenser Anti-Kult, ein Totenkult mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen knüpft sich an den Umgang mit Leichen, damit deren dämonische Infektion nicht auf ihre Umgebung, die Menschen und die Elemente, übergehe und sie verunreinige ⁷⁴⁾. Auf dass weder Erde noch Wasser noch Feuer mit ihnen in Berührung kämen, werden die toten Leiber an erhöhten Orten dem Frass der Tiere ausgesetzt ⁷⁵⁾. Die Totenwärter

66) Vgl. Geo Widengren, *Religionsphänomenologie*, 1969, 400 N 29, 419, 600f.; ders., *Die Religionen Irans*, 1965, 23-26, bes. 26. Hiezu Y. 29,1; 32,10.12.14 (dazu Christian Bartholomae, *Die Gatha's des Awesta, Zarathushtra's Verspredigten*, 1905, 33f. N 7, 8, 11); 48,7 (dazu ders., 93 N 8); 49,4.

67) Vgl. V. 18,54-57f.

68) Vgl. Y. 9,32; 10,14f; V. 18,61ff; auch 8,31f; Yt. 19,80.

69) V. 1,16; 7,23ff.54ff; 8,73ff; 16,17. Vgl. auch 3,8f (Erdbestattung).

70) Widengren, *Rel. Irans*, 115f., weiss dem Phänomen des Endokannibalismus iranischer Stämme keinen Sinn abzugewinnen. Zum Endokannibalismus u. Verw. vgl. auch Kunz Dittmer, *Allgemeine Völkerkunde*, 1954, 73. Endokanibalische Praktiken zur Einverleibung des (vermeintlich) heilsamen Leichenmanas noch in neuester Zeit bei den Iren. Hans Hartmann, *Der Totenkult in Irland*, 1952, 18ff.

71) Siehe V. 19,28ff.

72) Nasav- (Leiche; Leichenhexe), was idg. genau *véxus* entspricht. Hans Reichelt, *Awestisches Elementarbuch*, 2.A. 1967, Glossar, s.v.

73) V. 7,1ff; 5,27ff.

74) Zur Ansteckung der Lebenden s. die St oben N 73 u. V. 8,97ff. Zur Verunreinigung der Erde V. 6,1ff; 3,8f.12f.36ff — des Wassers V. 6,26ff — des Feuers V. 5,39ff; 7,25ff; 8,73ff (16,17).

75) V. 6,44ff. Vgl. die „Türme des Schweigens“ bei den heutigen Parsen (Gundolf, *Totenkult*, 109ff.). — Diese Bestattungsart ist natürlich nicht von Zarathustra erfunden worden; er hat sie in seiner nomadischen Umgebung

sind tabu, leben von der menschlichen Gemeinschaft ausgeschlossen; wenn sie zum Dienst unnütz geworden sind, bringt man sie um ⁷⁶). Den Männerbünden als Hauptträgern der frühern orgiastisch-„leibhaften“ Verbundenheit mit den Toten ist der Zoroastrismus natürlich ausgesprochen abhold ⁷⁷). Die Verdrängung eines Totenkults hat hier einen neuen Totenkult heraufbeschworen, der auf den ersten Blick nicht minder zwanghaft anmutet als der moderne nordamerikanische ⁷⁸). Er hat ein umfängliches Schrifttum kultisch-rechtlichen Inhalts entstehen lassen, das an makabren Details kaum zu überbieten ist: das Vidēvdāt — wörtlich: das gegen die Daēvas Gesetzte — das Gesetz gegen die Dämonen ⁷⁹). Der darin regulierte negative Totenkult ist aber religionsgeschichtlich durchaus sinnvoller Kult (im Gegensatz zu seinem neurotischen amerikanischen „Halbbruder“), weil *bewusster* Gegenkult. Wir sprechen also besser von *Substitution* als von *Verdrängung*. Zudem bleibt das Band zwischen Lebenden und Toten im zoroastrischen Totenglauben und -brauchtum durchaus vital. Die „Seelen“ der Verstorbenen sind zu Schützern (s.o. bei u. mit N 63) der Rechtgläubigen geworden ⁸⁰). Ihre lebenerhaltende und -spendende Funktion geht so weit, dass sie sogar bei der endzeitlichen Totenauferstehung mitwirken müssen ⁸¹). Und alljährlich zu bestimmter Zeit besuchen sie die Gläubigen während 10 Nächten, werden von ihnen mit Fleisch und Kleidern bewirtet und spenden dafür dem gastfreundlichen Haus Vieh und „Männer“ (gemeint: Söhne) ⁸²).

(Widengren, Rel. Irans, 35/36) vorgefunden und seinen religiösen Ideen dienstbar gemacht (Substitution der Erdbestattung mit ihren chthonischen Kulturen, auch der Leichenverbrennung). Höchstens ihre Rechtfertigung ist neu!

76) V. 3,14ff.

77) Widengren, Religionsphänomenologie, 134, u. die oben N 66-69 aufgeführten St. Die Männerbündler sind Daēva-Verehrer (Dämonenverehrer)!

78) Vgl. etwa V. 5,1ff u. 8,33ff!

79) Gundolf, Totenkult, 42: „wohl die allerstrengsten Gesetze..., die auf diesem Gebiet bekannt sind“. Ausführliche Inhaltsangabe b. Reichelt, Aw. E., § 18.

80) Yt. 26,7: Die Seelen der Verstorbenen werden als Fravašays der Aša-Gläubigen verehrt. Vgl. überhaupt den ganzen Yasna; auch das ganze Fravartin Yašt (s.o. N 64).

81) Yt. 13,28.

82) Yt. 13,49ff: ... gəušča vaθwa vīranəmča — Herden von Vieh und Männern (V. 52). Dass „Männer“ hier Söhne meint, wird durch eine ähnliche St RV. X,15,11d gestützt, wo die Ahnen (die pitarah) um Reichtum angerufen werden, der in vielen starken *Söhnen* bestehen soll (rayīm sarvavīram = eig. „vielmännriger“ Reichtum). Gleich übersetzt Arthur Anthony Macdonell, A Vedic Reader for Students, Containing thirty Hymns of the Rīgveda in the original Saṃhitā and Pada Texts..., 7.A. 1970, 183.

THE SPANISH SHRINE

BY

WILLIAM A. CHRISTIAN JR.

Hamden, Conn., U.S.A.

The shrines of Spain, by definition, have one feature in common: within their precincts is an image or a relic of a Saint, Mary, or Christ, that is particularly venerated. These images are thought by the people and priests to be specially charged with grace, able to deliver help better than most images, and especially interested in the people and places around them. The people deliver to these favored images their special devotion, their intensest love and veneration, their most concentrated attention, and in return, as if in compensation, the image is seen to reciprocate with comfort and, at times, practical help. It is as if benevolent mental energy were collected in the image from those who worship it, and redistributed to those seeking it.

The concept of the persistent value of belief and devotion—its sure convertibility into spiritual or practical graces—has been a part of Christianity from its inception. Christ time and again demanded a confession of faith from those who sought his help, and then said, "Your faith has made you well." Similarly, in the case of cures at shrines in Spain, it is understood that one of the factors that comes into play is the confidence in God's power of the person seeking the cure. The almost mathematical convertibility of prayer to certain images into relief from purgatory has long been encouraged by the Church. The image itself seems to act as a kind of transformer in these situations—transforming sentiments of love, veneration, and penance into mental and physical relief, reassurance, and progress toward salvation. The image is a focus, an identifiable, person-like object, which serves to draw these sentiments out of the believer and make believable, as if coming from an all-comprehending, benevolent patron, parent, or friend, the returns of help.

This process of spiritual relief involves a direct contact between the image (or the holy figure it represents) and the devotee. Although

there are priests in attendance at the regional and provincial shrines, and in all shrines priests confess pilgrims and say mass on the shrine feast days, the role of the priest in shrines is essentially incidental. The person comes to *see* and *communicate* with the *image*. Many of the shrines I visited in the course of my research were normally locked up, but almost all had a kind of grille or aperture near the door through which the image could be seen and spoken to, and through which an offering could be made. The high point of the visits of pilgrims to shrines that are open is some manner of physical contact—usually a kiss—with the image or relic. Many images have a medal on a ribbon for kissing. On others there are places to kiss at the base of the statue, which is accessible by a stairway in a special chapel behind the altar.

Although a parish church may also be a shrine, the shrine image exists on a different order of reality from the parish church and the institutions the parish represents. Every parish has a church, and every parish has a priest who administers the church. The priests are interchangeable. Any priest can perform the sacraments; any priest can grant absolution. But the image in the shrine is a different matter. It usually represents a message from the divine to the community of protection and comfort. It is a token or security of divine help in the maintenance of the community, a testimony of particular interest on the part of the divine to those particular people, proven by the way in which the image appeared, or was miraculously found, or at one point came alive and shed real tears, or gave real blood. God is here. Mary is present in the village, on our land, in our place. She talks to us. She knows our condition. She is there for us to turn to when we need her. She takes a special interest in us, the people of this village, of the valley, of these mountains, of this district, of this province, of Spain.

For the images are treated as people. Very special people, but members nevertheless of the group; the most honored members, who have the most honored place in its processions, but who are nevertheless there to process with everyone else. It is only a mild hyperbole to say that the shrine images are seen as holy persons who have chosen to share in, to dwell with the rest of the community. In Spain there are a number of shrines to hermits, places where holy people—princesses like Casilda and Feliciano, shepherds from afar like Pascual

Bailón and Urbez—are supposed to have come to live and share the land and the vicissitudes of life with the rest of the people. Similarly the other images—of Mary, the Crucified Christ, Saint Roch, Saint Eulalia—or the saints they represent also came by their own choice to join the community and illustrate the landscape. Such saints appeared (and continue to appear) from out of nowhere to the lowliest of the members of the village—to its shepherds, its deafmutes, its children, its plowmen—and make friends with them and arrangements for staying on indefinitely. The shrine images are the very honored permanent guests of the people. They belong, very definitely, to the people, not to its priests, who themselves are often alien to the community. (In the case of monastery shrines, the monastery itself is the community, and the image its most honored member.)

The experience of contact with the shrine image is the basis for the village's intimate compact with another world, with eternity, with heaven. It is the village's or the region's direct, personal, almost private connection with the reality behind the external reality, with the world behind the world. It is to this image that people repair when they can discern no longer the causes behind events, when their world is threatened from the sources that almost certainly lie beyond it. It is the place to seek redress when death and destruction threaten to overtake the world of daily life. The shrine is the village's tap on the source, its one means of influence. And the villagers know that after death, the benevolence and allowances that the shrine image, one of their village, will make for them will ease their transition into the other world.

In rural Spain the emotional level of the mass to a shrine image is very different from that of a regular mass. There is an additional presence in a shrine which shifts the orientation of the congregation from the priest to the altar and its image. While one of the high points for the individual is the personal contact with the image, for the group the climax is a procession with the image outside the building, sometimes to the town and back, sometimes accompanied by dances to the image. This ceremony restates year after year, and on the dramatic occasions of critical supplications, the joint patrimony of the village and the divine protector in the landscape they share, and the joint endeavor that both are engaged in—living well in the world and conserving the integrity of the local domain from natural and supernatural forces.

The shrine religion compared to the parish religion is analogous to an American revival meeting compared to a Sunday service. Whereas some sects in America seem to have a direct emotional tie-in to the Spirit, and others are more sedate and "distant" from their God, in rural Spanish Catholicism the direct religion and the institutional religion are both present as shrine and church, each in its own time, and generally each in its own place. The church, where it should be, in the center of the community, in the midst of its daily, routine affairs; and the shrine generally removed, set off from the normal world because it is a station for another world, the world behind this world. The church is used regularly, but the shrine is generally saved for special occasions, as if contact with such power and energy were too much for daily life.

Consider the delicacy of the hermit saints to live a life nearby but apart from the more mundane villagers. Surely it was not only to gain solitude, but also to avoid the imposition of their extreme standards on the villagers by comparison. They were content to remain as consultants, gentle ideals, implicit measures for conduct, rather than to try to convert the village or the city nearby to saintliness. As with monasticism in Theravada Buddhism, and in contrast with later missionaries like St. Vincent Ferrer, their role was more to redeem and expiate than to convert. This position was based on a perception of the mundaneness of daily life, and its incompatibility with saintliness. So it is that such divinity as the shrine image represents is generally described in the legend of apparition or discovery as choosing to have its shrine built away from the village; indeed often explicitly rejecting the parish church as its resting place. The shrine image has as its mission, like the hermits, not the conversion of the villagers, but rather their spiritual refreshment, a periodic purification, and a constant availability for consultation and aid.

Shrine images represent not only protection and access to divine power. They also stand for perfect love. Their power, indeed, is the power that comes from love. In the villages of the North where I lived, and in other parts of Spain where the people were devoted to certain divine intermediaries, these intermediaries were members of families as well as members of the community. In villages with "strong" shrine images the divine figure seems to replace lost family members—an only child, a spouse, a loved parent—in an individual's heart. If mothers

turn to the saints most for help and protection for their children, people most alone turn to the saints most for love and companionship. This kind of devotion, as human relationships of love are ideally supposed to be, does not involve trades or promises as much as gifts and affection. It is a kind of devotion most characteristic of women, but also of certain kinds of men—those with long-term illnesses, priests, and some batchelors; those most alone.

In Spain female divine images are more likely to be treated with affectionate love as well as supplication, and male images, especially those of Christ, are more often limited in their usage to relationships of power. Some Marian images, even (like El Pilar) among the most powerful, are popularly referred to with diminutives, like the nicknames used for village members among their peers. Such affectionate treatment is also accorded some of the male saints, but for Christ it would appear to be *lèse majesté*. It is my impression also that divine figures in the more egalitarian countryside of the North of Spain are treated with more personal affection than in the South, where a more highly stratified rural society is reflected in treatment of shrine images with the respect befitting figures of authority. (This difference can be seen in the inscriptions of contemporary votive offerings.)

The extent to which shrine images are considered important family members, and the distinction between the regular religion and the direct religion of the shrine, are evident from the rituals parallel to the sacraments that people have developed for the shrines. Baptism must take place in the parish church, so a kind of parallel baptism has developed at many shrines, involving the consecration of the child to the shrine image—in effect assigning the baby its personal patron. Termed “offering” the child to the image, in many parts of Spain it involves an emotional ceremony in which the parents formally introduce the child to the shrine image or its replica immediately after baptism. With images that are less accessible, children are placed under the sacred mantle of the image on fiesta days, to symbolize the placing of the child under the protection of the divine figure that the image represents.

The rooms in shrines devoted to votive offerings bear witness to the desire of the people to share the important sacramental events that they undergo in their parish church with their divine protector at the

shrine. In addition to the votive offerings made to the shrine in times of critical need, such rooms typically include first communion pictures and garments, wedding dresses, and wedding bouquets. In fact many shrines are the sites of first communions, particularly of the wealthy. Weddings also take place in the more accessible shrines. In some villages there is a regular procession from the parish church to the shrine to deposit the wedding bouquet.

And finally in death there is the custom, best known for Our Lady of Pilar but also found in other Castilian shrines, of dying beneath the mantle of the shrine image. In the case of Pilar a number of mantles have been made for this purpose and sacralized by being placed on the image. They are available in the region around Zaragoza for devotees of Pilar who are near death and seek the Virgin's protection in the afterlife. Such persons' obituaries carry the notation, "falleció bajo el manto de Nuestra Senora del Pilar". Throughout Spain it is common for persons on their deathbed to try to die with a prayer to their personal patron on their lips. After death, as a kind of parallel to the funeral, many shrines have prayer cooperatives, known as brotherhoods, whose members meet at regular intervals at the shrine for a mass for the souls of their deceased brethren. In these various ways those Spaniards who are devotees of a particular sacred figure seek to undergo the major transitions of life and death in the presence of and with the aid of their divine patron; often these various consecrations are of as much concern as the sacramental acts themselves.

Devotion to specific, local divine figures may be the oldest surviving form of religion in Spain. In the process of secularization it also seems to be the last kind of devotion to go, the longest to hold on. In many places during the most recent (as of 1975) civil war, the images of the parish church were destroyed, but those of the shrine were respected. In the valley of Cabuérniga (Santander), the local "reds" declared of their shrine image of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel that "our Virgin is Communist". As in this case, in some areas of the country the shrine is seen as indigenous and local, having an independence from the established Church and the Church's political interests. In many parts of Andalusia, although few people attend church, the rural population is still largely involved in the complex give and take of promises, in the network of allegiances, devotions, and patronage that forms around

the images of the local and regional shrines. Recent apparitions in that area have occurred in part to persons who had rarely been to mass, but who were well acquainted with the area shrines.

For many people, whether or not they have much to do with the established Church, the shrine and the shrine image is the only place they can turn to in times of need, the only feasible alternative. There they can find a sure ear, always willing to listen, the comfort of a benevolent presence. Not a busy doctor who prescribes expensive medicines, not an employer whom it is demeaning to seek help from, nor a priest who is Señor, nor a neighbor who is equally powerless and probably indiscreet, but a humane being who has also suffered, who is open to the sharing of suffering, and who, if anybody can, will alleviate the danger, the anxiety, the insecurity that are all too common features of rural life. No other agency is so comprehensive in its capabilities, dealing with the trivial bother as well as the ultimate questions. No one else will listen with such patience and discretion. No one else is at once so powerful and yet knowledgeable about local conditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The above note is based on personal research in Spain. Some further reading is suggested below.

Caro Baroja, Julio, "El sociocentrismo del pueblo español" in *Rasas, pueblos y linajes*, Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1957.

Christian, William A. Jr., "Panorama de las devociones a santuarios españoles desde el principio de la edad media hasta nuestros días," in *Temas de Antropología Española*, ed. Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, Madrid, Akal, 1975.

—, *Person and God in a Spanish Valley*, New York and London, Academic Press, 1972.

Freeman, Susan T., "Religious Aspects of the Social Organization of a Castillian Village," *Amer. Anthropologist* 70, No. 1, 34-49.

Mintz, Jerome R., "Comfortable Old Shrines; Divisive New Visions," *Natural History*, April, 1974, 40-46, 85.

Staehlin, Carlos M., *Apariciones*, Madrid, Razón y Fe, 1954.

ADDITION TO ARTICLE ON "RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE"

(*Numen*, XXIII, 3, Dec. 1976)

In *Numen*, Vol. XXIII, Fasc. 3 (December 1976), pp. 229 and 238, mention is made of the *Literatuur Bulletin*, a quarterly published in Dutch by the Institute for the Study of Religion at the Free University, Amsterdam. This quarterly contains abstracts of books and articles published in the field of science of religion.

Since 1976 this quarterly has begun to appear in a revised form, not yet known at the time that the article had been written at the beginning of 1975. It is now published in English under the title of *Science of Religion Bulletin. Abstracts and Index of Recent Articles*, and is produced jointly by the Institute for the Study of Religion at the Free University, Amsterdam, and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in the University of Leeds (U.K.). Each issue contains more than a hundred abstracts written by a number of specialists. Subscriptions can be made through the Administration of the Science of Religion Bulletin: The Institute for the Study of Religion, Free University, P.O. Box 7161, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

J. W.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Books

- ANTHOLOGIE des philosophies iraniens depuis le XVIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours, Tome II, Textes choisis et présentés par Sayyed Jalâloddin Ashtiyâni — introduction analytique par H. Corbin, — Teheran, Paris, 1975.
- BECKFORD, James A., *The Trumpet of Prophecy, A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, — Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975, 244 p.
- BEIDLER, W. *The Vision of Self in Early Vedānta*, — Delhi, Motilal Banarsidars, 1976, 266 p.
- BERGGREN, Erik, *The Psychology of Confession*, — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975, 218 p.
- BIEZAIS, Haralds, *Lichtgott der alten Letten*, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, VIII — Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1976, 210 p.
- BIANCHI, U., *The History of Religions*, — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975, 228 p.
- BLÁZQUES, José Maria, *Diccionario de las Religiones Preromanas de Hispania*, — Istmo, Colegio Universitario de Ediciones, 1975, 189 p.
- BLOCH, Raymond, *Recherches sur les religions de l'Italie antique, Hautes études du monde gréco-romain*, — Genève, Librairie Droz, 1976, 135 p.
- BODEWITZ, H. W., *The daily evening and morning offering (agnihotra) according to the Brāhmaṇas*, — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976, 211 p.
- BONINO, José Míguez, *Revolutionary Theology comes of Age*. — London, S. P. C. K. 1975, 179 p.

- CHURCH, Society and Politics, Papers read at the thirteenth summer meeting and fourteenth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society, edited by Derek Baker, *Studies in Church History*. Volume 12 — Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975, 440 p.
- CLAVIER, Henri, *Les vanités de la pensée biblique et le problème de son unité*, *Supplements to Novum Testamentum*, Volume XLII — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976, 424 p.
- COHEN, S. S., *Advaitic Sadhanā, or the Yoga of Direct Liberation*, — Delhi, Motilal Banarsidars, 1975, 92 p.
- CROSBY, Donald A., *Horac Bushnell's Theory of Language*, — The Hague, Paris, 1975, 300 p.

Periodicals

- Annuaire École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, Ve Section*, Tome LXXX-LXXXI, Fasc I, III.
- Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 38, 19e année, juillet-décembre 1975; 41, 21 année, janvier-juin. 1976.
- Folklore*, Volume 86, Spring 1975; Volume 86, Summer 1975; Volume 86, Spring 1975; Volume 86, Autumn-Winter 1975; Volume 87, 1976. I; Volume 87, 1976 II.
- History of Religions*, Volume 14, Number 3, Febr. 1975; Volume 14, Number 4, May 1975; Volume 15, Number 1, August 1975; Volume 15, Number 2, November 1975; Volume 15, Number 3, February 1976; Volume 15, Number 4, May 1976.
- Indian Philosophy of Culture*, Vol. XIX, No 3, September 1974: No 4, December 1974.
- Kairos, Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie, Neue Folge*, XVI Jahrgang, 1974, Heft 2; Heft 3-4; XVII Jahrgang, 1975, Heft 1; Heft 2; XVII Jahrgang, 1975, Heft 3-4; XVIII Jahrgang, 1976, Heft 1; Heft 2; Heft 3.
- Prospettive sul Sacro, Contributi al Convegno su „Il Sacro”*, indetto dal Centre Internazionale di Studi Umanistiche e dall'Istituto di Studi Filosofici, Roma, Gennaio 1974, a cura di Enrico Castelli, Roma Istituto di Studi Filosofici, 1974.
- Theologie der Gegenwart*, 18 Jg. '75/3; '75/4; 19 Jg. '76/1; '76/2; '76/3; '76/4.
- Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Tome CLXXVII, 1, Janvier 1975; Avril 1975; Tome CLXXXVIII, 1, Juillet 1975; Tome CLXXXIX, 1, Janvier 1976; 2, Avril 1976; Tome CXC, 1, Juillet 1976.

LES IDÉES DU 18^e SIÈCLE SUR L'IDOLÂTRIE, ET LES AUDACES DE DAVID HUME ET DU PRÉSIDENT DE BROSSES

PAR

Mme. M. V. DAVID

Paris, France

A l'occasion du bicentenaire de la mort de Charles de Brosses (1709-1777)

Le sujet annoncé par ce titre concerne le milieu du 18^e siècle: il s'agit d'expliquer le caractère intellectuellement scandaleux que revêtirent pour l'homme cultivé, les positions indépendantes et convergentes, prises par David Hume et par le Président de Brosses, à l'égard des idées dominantes sur l'idolâtrie ancienne, entre 1756 et 1760.

En leur isolement, Hume et de Brosses comptaient d'ailleurs — à leur insu d'abord — un allié en la personne de Diderot qui, le premier, avait indiqué l'importance du problème et l'intérêt de son étude. Dans l'article „Bible” de l'*Encyclopédie* ¹⁾, il avait en effet proposé de reprendre les données de l'Ancien Testament, pour une recherche nouvelle, historique, sur l'idolâtrie ancienne. Un traité sur cette matière ne serait, dit-il „ni le moins curieux, ni le moins philosophique, ni le moins savant”. Ces paroles font comprendre l'enthousiasme avec lequel, en 1756, Diderot adhère aux thèses de de Brosses, qu'il rapproche aussitôt des idées lancées par Hume, quatre mois auparavant ²⁾.

Déjà le 17^e siècle avait traité de l'idolâtrie, souvent en relation spéciale avec l'Égypte. Gérard Vossius avait compilé une masse de témoignages sur l'idolâtrie ³⁾. Athanase Kircher, malgré l'intempérance de ses interprétations symbolistes, s'était gardé de dénier toute réalité aux cultes animaliers des Égyptiens ⁴⁾. Mais Bossuet évoquait franche-

1) *Encyclopédie*, t. II (1751).

2) Cf. M. David, „Histoire des religions et philosophie au 18^e siècle: le Président de Brosses, David Hume et Diderot”, *Revue philosophique*, 1974, n° 2, p. 145 et s. (= art. *Rev. philos.*).

3) *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae* (Amsterdam, 1641).

4) Tenus, certes, pour postérieurs au monothéisme; cf. *Oedipus aegyptiacus*, t. I (1652), p. 241 et s. Le culte du crocodile est déclaré symbolique (*ib.*, 57).

ment, d'un côté, le culte insensé des animaux attesté dans l'antiquité égyptienne; et, de l'autre, la haute sagesse attribuée à ce même pays. Le Père Bernard Lamy soulignait l'ancienneté de l'idolâtrie, qui apparaît après la chute et bien avant le déluge ⁵⁾. Simultanément, s'ajoutaient aux descriptions des religions païennes, des relations de voyageurs où prenaient place les cultes africains ⁶⁾.

I. *L'intellectualisation de la religion et l'idée d'idolâtrie, au 18^e siècle*

Aux siècles classiques, polythéisme et idolâtrie furent souvent tenus pour notions indissociables ⁷⁾. Leur commune origine était, selon le P. Beurrier ⁸⁾, par exemple, dans la corruption du monothéisme originel. Cette explication est ensuite détachée du dogme, et se développe sous l'action de certains facteurs, à partir de la fin du 17^e siècle.

La conscience des Européens cultivés est alors de plus en plus dominée par une *vue nouvelle de la religion naturelle* tenant à l'affirmation de la qualité rationnelle de l'univers ⁹⁾ et à la finalité interne du vivant. Pourvue désormais d'une telle plénitude, la religion naturelle était, en réalité, une conquête intellectuelle, une „religion de savants” ¹⁰⁾. Ce credo pouvait être celui du *théiste*, qui le conciliait avec l'appartenance à une confession déterminée ¹¹⁾. Aussi et principalement, il était celui du *déiste*, dont la dévotion épurée n'obéissait à aucune tradition. L'humain se rapproche alors du divin ¹²⁾ — d'où,

5) *Apparat de la Bible* (1697), t. III, ch. I, p. 473 et s.

6) Cf. A. Ross, *Les religions du monde* (Amsterdam, 1666), p. 68.

7) Lorsque Hume lui-même mentionne „le polythéisme ou l'idolâtrie”, le sens de la conjonction „ou” demeure imprécis.

8) *Speculum christianae religionis*, t. II, ch. X et s. (éd. de 1672).

9) Sur l'argument de l'ordre du monde, et le rapport entre la religion naturelle et l'oeuvre et la personne de Newton, cf. entre autres R. Hurlbutt, *Hume, Newton and the design argument* (Lincoln, 1965).

10) Cf. M. Malherbe, Introduction à la traduction de l'*Histoire naturelle de la religion de Hume* (1971), p. 9.

11) Selon Locke, dont l'influence se répand, la religion naturelle repose sur un fondement raisonnable que le théiste découvre à travers la tradition (cf. *The reasonableness of christianity as delivered in the Scriptures*, Londres, 1695).

12) La relation de l'homme à l'ordonnateur divin est *dans l'intelligence*, Dieu se prouvant par l'existence de sa créature, l'homme intelligent par qui se continue l'action divine. Cf. *Enc.*, t. XIV (1765), art. „Religion”, p. 81, et le témoignage de l'abbé Morellet, *Mémoires* (1821), t. I, p. 133, et t. II, p. 323 et s.

comme on va le voir, *le dédoublement de la religion naturelle, et la restriction à l'idée d'humanité.*

La religion naturelle, en son extension à tout le genre humain, n'est rien d'autre que l'hypothétique égalité du don du monothéisme à chaque individu. Mais un complet changement intervient quand, de toute sa force, la religion naturelle se concentre dans l'instant présent: dans la foi déiste qui anime et couronne le rayonnement des lumières, l'accroissement du savoir et l'art de gouverner les peuples conformément aux principes de la raison organisatrice ¹³).

On connaît le mépris manifesté par le 18^e siècle à l'égard de l'ignorance, du fanatisme, de la superstition. Ceci concerne essentiellement le peuple grossier, par lequel toutes choses dégénèrent. Il y a en effet corrélation entre la distinction de deux humanités (les hommes éclairés; le vulgaire) et le concept réélaboré d'idolâtrie. *Tout polythéisme est, pour certains, a priori condamnable parce que contraire à la raison* ¹⁴). *Mais la superstition surtout provient d'une accumulation d'erreurs: elle culmine dans l'idolâtrie*, cette „folie de l'esprit humain”, et se définit comme extravagance d'imagination et zèle barbare ¹⁵).

D'autres domaines — au premier chef poésie et beaux-arts — s'artificialisent ou se rationalisent dès les premières décennies du 18^e, sous des apparences de continuité avec le siècle précédent. Semblable observation se vérifierait aussi et surtout pour des séries de créations relevant de l'imagination symbolique, comme la devise et l'allégorie qui, après avoir été fort vivaces au 17^e siècle, s'altèrent et tombent en décadence ¹⁶).

On doit, finalement, attirer l'attention sur les désinvoltes affirmations, pseudo-historiques, de Voltaire. Celui-ci commence par

13) La masse ignorante est en dehors de l'aspiration au salut par la raison. Il ne lui est demandé que d'obéir. Sur le plan de la religion, le peuple ne saurait avoir de motifs raisonnés de croire; cf. *Enc.*, t. III (1753), art. „Christianisme”, et t. VIII (1757), art. „Foi”.

14) „La pluralité des dieux révolte les lumières naturelles...” Cette phrase de l'abbé de la Chambre (*Traité de la véritable religion*, 1737, t. I, p. 247) exprime en abrégé le sentiment de nombreux déistes (ou théistes) sur le polythéisme. Cf. *Enc.*, t. XII (1765), art. „Polythéisme”.

15) „Il n'a fallu qu'un exemple mal interprété pour autoriser les erreurs les plus révoltantes” (*Enc.*, t. VI, 1756, art. „Fanatisme”). Les aberrations populaires l'emportent visiblement ici, sur la fourberie souvent prêtée au clergé.

16) Cf. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 153.

dissocier polythéisme et idolâtrie ¹⁷), et termine en déniait à cette dernière toute réalité propre, en tant que phénomène premier et général, du moins ¹⁸).

1^o *Le polythéisme ne fut pas foncièrement idolâtre*: les statues n'étaient que des simulacres des dieux; le culte des astres ne fut pas idolâtre ¹⁹); les animaux sacrés d'Égypte, à l'origine, étaient de simples emblèmes, etc. ²⁰).

2^o Afin de soutenir, ensuite, la *nature dérivée de l'idolâtrie*, l'auteur invoque la radicale séparation des deux humanités et la théorie de la dégénérescence: pour que tout s'éclaire, il suffit de „mettre à part” la populace grossière, „absurde” partout et toujours ²¹). Les Sages abhorraient l'idolâtrie et, secrètement, rejetaient le polythéisme. Cette humanité comptant seule, il était permis d'avancer que l'idolâtrie n'avait pas existé.

Le célèbre écrivain arrêta là son plaidoyer en faveur de la pérennité du monothéisme (dont l'enseignement se serait longtemps limité à des cercles d'initiés) ²²).

De nombreux contemporains de Voltaire partageaient ces idées. Elles répondaient à un fort sentiment de *fraternité des lettrés*, à travers les époques, solidaire de la perspective des deux humanités. A preuve, ce passage de la critique (négative) des *Dieux fétiches*, due à M. de Grace: „Vous conviendrez peut-être avec moi qu'il n'y avait

17) Sur la position contraire, voir ci-dessus, p. 82.

18) Ou bien relativement premier, à supposer que l'on refusât de détacher l'idolâtrie d'un cadre théologique.

19) Sur l'observation des astres en Chaldée, antérieure à l'idolâtrie parce qu'ayant été originellement affaire de connaissance, cf. Poupart, *Mémoires de Trévoux*, 1712, p. 1618 et s.

20) L'abbé Pluche (1688-1761) avait présenté, à ce propos, un système réputé „ingénieux”: la première organisation des travaux agricoles était en relation avec les constellations du Zodiaque, d'où l'on tira des „affiches” (ou „images publiques”, annonciatrices des hiéroglyphes). Les animaux correspondant à ces figures ayant accédé à la dignité de symboles, la perversion ultérieure du sens de ces symboles expliquait les étranges cultes décrits par Hérodote. L'Égypte se trouvait ainsi disculpée de l'accusation d'avoir engendré l'idolâtrie.

21) Ici est à son comble la distinction des deux humanités. A l'époque du débat sur l'âme et l'intelligence des bêtes, D. Boullier avait écrit: „M. de V. [Voltaire] aperçoit cent fois plus de rapports entre la bête et l'homme, qu'entre un imbécile et un homme d'esprit...” (*Lettres sur les vrais principes de la religion*, 1741, t. II, p. 383).

22) *Enc.*, t. VIII (1765), art. „Idolâtrie” (voir également *Essai sur les mœurs*, et *Dictionnaire philosophique*).

point de fétiche pour les lettrés. Le peuple est partout superstitieux parce qu'il est ignorant, et semble même former une autre espèce d'hommes; de là cette inclination qu'on lui a reconnue pour l'idolâtrie" 23)

II. Les „hérésies" de Hume et du Président de Brosses

Deux oeuvres allaient poser en termes nouveaux le problème de l'idolâtrie, au milieu du 18^e siècle. — En février 1757, paraît *The natural history of religion*. Et, en mai, une première version des *Dieux fétiches* donne matière à une communication, en trois séances, du Président de Brosses 24) à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Diderot, sous les yeux duquel de Brosses a mis son manuscrit 25), marque, en retournant celui-ci, combien il approuve cette thèse indépendante. La toute récente démonstration de Hume trouve ici, dit-il, son complément 26). En 1760, moins de trois ans après, c'est *Du culte des dieux fétiches* 27) qui paraît. Parmi les additions certaines au texte de 1757 (perdu), sont des fragments des chapitres initiaux de l'*Histoire naturelle* 28). De la sorte, grâce à l'information et au lucide jugement de Diderot, se crée une association (momentanément à l'insu de Hume) entre ces deux entreprises simultanées. Mais cette liaison interne conduit Grimm à ne voir, pour le contenu philosophique 29), que pure et simple subordination entre l'ouvrage français et la dissertation anglaise 30).

23) *Mercure de France*, mai 1760, p. 102 et 105 (mots soulignés par nous).

24) Qui, dès 1756, avait tracé en quelques lignes le programme d'une enquête universelle sur les fétiches: *Histoire des navigations aux Terres australes*, t. II, p. 277).

25) L'accueil de l'Académie (dont le Président était associé libre) ayant été frais, l'auteur avait renoncé à être publié dans les *Mémoires* de la Compagnie et repris sa liberté d'action.

26) Voir, dans art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 147, le principal passage de la lettre publiée par nos soins: „Lettres inédites de Diderot et de Hume, écrites de 1755 à 1763, au Président de Brosses", *Revue philosophique*, 1966, p. 135 et s.

27) *Ou parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Égypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie*. A Genève, sans nom d'auteur ni de lieu.

28) Par un début de phrase („Un célèbre écrivain étranger de qui je tire une partie de ces réflexions...", *D. fét.*, p. 218), de Brosses se désigne comme débiteur, sans évaluer l'importance de la dette. Cf. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 149: lettre du Président à Hume (fin 1763 ou début 1764): rappel des suites du scandale Helvétius qui, en 1760, empêchaient le signataire de citer plus expressément la provenance des fragments reproduits.

29) Ici, élevé fort au-dessus des faits.

30) *Correspondance littéraire*, 15 avril 1760.

Deux tâches se dessinent donc: examiner au présent chapitre l'accord foncier des deux oeuvres; puis définir la valeur originale — pour la théorie de l'idolâtrie spécialement — des *Dieux fétiches* ³¹⁾.

— La commune réaction de Hume et de de Brosses ³²⁾ vis-à-vis des préjugés qui pesaient sur bon nombre de leurs contemporains, se manifeste le plus visiblement par la critique de la religion naturelle chez l'un, et chez l'autre, par la critique de l'idéalisation de l'Égypte: avec l'*Histoire naturelle* et les *Dialogues sur la religion naturelle* ³³⁾, Hume poursuit sur le plan de la religion, son étude de la nature humaine; de Brosses, en militant contre l'image factice de l'Égypte, ouvre la voie à une histoire des religions ³⁴⁾. C'est ainsi que chacun, à sa manière, de son point de vue propre, résiste à la conception intellectualisée, antihistorique, du fait religieux, dans laquelle le 18^e siècle paraît s'enfermer.

Des conséquences en résultent pour le *problème de l'homme* — à commencer par la négation de la perspective des deux humanités: l'assurance de l'homme éclairé, sa détermination optimiste, en sont diminuées ³⁵⁾. Hume, impitoyablement, dénonce la fragilité naturelle de l'être humain ³⁶⁾ et, dans l'ordre vertical, celle de la raison ³⁷⁾ — rien n'étant, sans doute, acquis pour toujours ³⁸⁾.

Il y a lieu de relever, à ce propos, que Bayle déjà — fort lu en Angleterre — avait surmonté les explications par la dégénérescence et parlé de la faiblesse de la raison humaine ³⁹⁾, pour suggérer une

31) Théorie présentée dans la section III du livre où, justement, se situent les références aux idées de Hume.

32) A laquelle est à joindre celle de Diderot; cf. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 148: texte de 1752.

33) Posthumes, et longuement élaborés à partir de 1750 environ.

34) Sur la connexion Égypte-religion naturelle, cf. *ib.*, p. 152 et s.

35) Cf. ci-dessus, p. 82.

36) *The natural history of religion*, éd. H. E. Root (Londres, 1956), ch. III, p. 30. Cf. *L'histoire naturelle de la religion*, traduction M. Malherbe (1971), p. 48; les passages de l'ouvrage de Hume cités ci-dessous en français, sont extraits de cette traduction.

37) *Histoire naturelle*, ch. XV (p. 104). Cf. Introduction de M. Malherbe, p. 20: „... la faiblesse de l'esprit humain est telle qu'intervient toujours un moment où il se relâche de sa tension; et plus l'effort a été grand, plus la détente est forte”.

38) Cf. *ib.*, VIII, p. 70: révolutions successives des sentiments et des croyances.

39) *Dictionnaire*, art. „Manichéens”, D. Cf. „Averroès”: la „formation de la pensée”, sujet „difficile entre tous”.

vue nouvelle du paganisme ⁴⁰) et faire place à l'histoire ⁴¹). Peu avant sa mort, il avait encore attiré l'attention sur l'ouvrage du navigateur Bosman ⁴²): c'est toujours pour un renouvellement des vues sur le paganisme, Egypte comprise, qu'il milite en prescrivant d'utiliser les données concernant les religions des barbares et des Nègres ⁴³).

Les passages les plus significatifs de l'*Histoire naturelle* se trouvent dans les premiers chapitres, sur le polythéisme, auxquels on joindra les vues d'ensemble des chapitres VIII et XIII ⁴⁴). En apparence insoucieux de son isolement, Hume prend le contre-pied de conceptions du polythéisme et de l'idolâtrie, devenues habituelles. Contre cette histoire accidentelle et, somme toute, négative, qu'imaginaient les déistes ⁴⁵), ses appréciations critiques visaient à dévoiler une brutale réalité:

„Il doit apparaître impossible que le théisme ait pu être par raisonnement la première religion de la race humaine, et donner ensuite naissance, par sa corruption, au polythéisme et à toutes les superstitions du monde païen" ⁴⁶).

Au chapitre I, que domine la magistrale distinction des niveaux de pensée, l'auteur affirme:

„Il semble certain qu'en vertu du progrès naturel de la pensée humaine, la multitude ignorante doit d'abord entretenir des notions vulgaires et familières des puissances supérieures, avant d'étendre sa pensée à cet Etre parfait qui confère l'ordre à l'entier agencement de la nature. Nous pouvons aussi bien imaginer que les hommes habitèrent des palais avant d'habiter des huttes et des cabanes, ou étudièrent la géométrie avant l'agriculture, que soutenir qu'ils saisirent la Divinité sous la forme d'un pur esprit omniscient, omnipotent et omniprésent, avant de l'appréhender comme un être puissant quoique limité..." ⁴⁷).

Cette étude de la religion cite seulement un nombre restreint de faits, empruntés aux auteurs anciens ayant parlé des religions et

40) Art. „Cainites", C et D.

41) Sur Bayle et l'histoire, cf. J. Solé, dans le recueil *Religion, érudition et critique à la fin du 17^e siècle et au début du 18^e* (1968), p. 109 et s.

42) *Réponses aux questions d'un provincial*, t. IV (paru en 1707), p. 372 et s., sur le *Voyage de Guinée* de Bosman (Utrecht, 1705) et le culte des fétiches.

43) Cf. *ib.*, p. 367, et déjà *ib.*, t. II (1706), p. 310.

44) VIII: „Flux et reflux du polythéisme et du théisme". Dans XIII: vue des principes de la nature humaine qui interviennent (contradictoirement parfois) dans la religion.

45) Cf. Introduction Malherbe, p. 21.

46) *Histoire naturelle*, fin du ch. I (p. 44).

47) *ib.*, p. 41. Tout le problème est d'admettre une humanité primitivement ignorante, dont la vie pourra se transformer grâce au développement de la raison.

cultes de leur pays ou de pays étrangers — ou à quelques auteurs modernes ⁴⁸). Cette „documentation” dont la minceur étonne aujourd’hui, relève d’ailleurs d’un parti-pris: l’*Histoire naturelle*, liée aux précédents travaux philosophiques de Hume — qui l’éclairent ⁴⁹) —, est un *essai*, non un *travail d’érudition* ⁵⁰) — cet essai impliquant néanmoins l’appel à l’histoire. Or, d’une certaine façon, la jonction souhaitée entre philosophie et histoire ⁵¹), se réalise effectivement avec les *Dieux fétiches* — la condition essentielle étant l’adhésion, de part et d’autre, à la perspective du progrès naturel de la pensée, par élévation de l’inférieur au supérieur.

Comme de Brosses, Hume repousse l’interprétation allégorique des cultes animaliers de l’Egypte. Mais tandis que la religion égyptienne primitive est au centre des *Dieux fétiches*, dans l’ouvrage anglais, la „folie des Egyptiens” est raillée comme en passant... ⁵²). Dira-t-on que Hume parle de l’Egypte *aussi*, et que de Brosses, prenant pour pierre de touche l’exemple égyptien, s’exprime sur celui-ci avec une ardeur polémique et démonstrative, qui fait contraste? Il n’en demeure pas moins qu’au-dessus des nuances ou des différences d’équilibre, c’est l’aversion pour l’explication symbolique, aversion commune aux deux „hérétiques”, qui importe ⁵³).

Deux différences notables sont toutefois à signaler. En premier, l’usage des termes „idolâtrie, idolâtre”, et „polythéisme” — les premiers étant peu définis dans le langage du temps et chez Hume lui-même. A ce sujet, des observations s’imposent. D’une part, subsiste l’association entre „idolâtrie” et „ignorance” ⁵⁴). D’autre part, il

48) Dans l’Introduction de l’auteur, sont brièvement invoqués les témoignages des voyageurs et des historiens.

49) Cf. Introduction Malherbe, p. 13, 25, et Notes du traducteur, p. 130 et s.

50) Une étude des emplois du mot „érudition”, au milieu du 18^e siècle, serait ici nécessaire.

51) Jonction exceptionnelle pour cette époque, à laquelle sont séparés le monde „érudit” - c’est-à-dire le milieu de ceux qui préparent le développement de l’histoire comme science - et le public éclairé. L’histoire s’insère mal, en effet, dans l’horizon des Lumières: à de telles recherches, jugées „lassantes”, propres à „redoubler les ténèbres” d’un passé lointain, d’aucuns préféreraient ouvertement les clartés de „preuves raisonnables”.

52) A plusieurs reprises, il est vrai: v. *Histoire naturelle*, non seulement ch. IV (p. 53), mais aussi p. 61, 72, 79, 81 et s.

53) Il se peut que, pour le public de langue anglaise, la question de la religion naturelle l’emportât en acuité sur le problème de l’Egypte.

54) Cf. ci-dessus, p. 82 et 83, et *ib.* I (p. 41).

advient que, chez Hume, „idolâtre” gagne en généralité (et perde en force expressive), lorsqu’il est pris pour équivalent de „païen”⁵⁵); et semblablement pour „idolâtrie”, glissant vers „paganisme”⁵⁶). Enfin, entre „idolâtrie” et „polythéisme” conjointement employés, la discrimination s’avère malaisée⁵⁷). On dirait que Hume, délaissant les débats anciens sur l'idolâtrie, mais gardant le mot, déplace la question en donnant le pas au „polythéisme”, conçu comme religion primitive de l’humanité, et fruit de l’imagination et de la crainte⁵⁸). — On verra, au prochain chapitre, la tentative de classification des faits religieux et l’essai d’élucidation de l'idolâtrie⁵⁹), présentés par de Brosses.

Quant à la seconde différence, la voici. Hume, en traitant de la religion, considère principalement les *agents invisibles* conçus à la ressemblance de l’homme et fréquemment représentés *par des statues* surtout. Il n’omet cependant point de faire place au culte d’*objets visibles, étrangers aux ouvrages de l’art*: astres; plantes; animaux; pierres brutes⁶⁰). Volontairement, il affronte ainsi les plus gênants aspects de l’„idolâtrie” — et s’efforce de *concilier avec sa conception anthropomorphique de la religion*⁶¹), *le culte rendu à ces objets*⁶²). Un rapprochement est alors établi entre pierres sacrées et statues divines:

„C’est sans doute à cause de l’absence de ces arts⁶³), que, dans les âges grossiers et barbares, les hommes déifiaient les plantes, les animaux et même la matière brute inorganisée, et que, plutôt que de manquer d’objets sensibles⁶⁴), ils divinisaient des formes aussi disgracieuses’.

55) Cf. *ib.* III (p. 46), VI (p. 64), VIII (p. 70), XIII (p. 93 et s.).

56) V. surtout *ib.* VIII (p. 70).

57) *Ib.* I (p. 40), IV (p. 55), etc.

58) *Ib.* II (p. 44).

59) Et de la notion de „polythéisme”.

60) Voir *ib.*, ch. IV et V.

61) Les hommes ont une tendance universelle à concevoir tous les êtres à leur ressemblance” (*ib.* III, p. 48). Cf. n. 11 de M. Malherbe, avec renvois au *Traité sur la nature humaine* et aux *Dialogues*.

62) Précédemment, l’auteur a écrit: „Si forte que soit la tendance des hommes à croire en une puissance invisible et intelligente, présente dans la nature, il ont une tendance aussi forte à porter leur attention sur les objets sensibles et visibles; et afin de réconcilier ces inclinations contraires, ils en viennent à unir la puissance invisible avec quelque objet visible” (*ib.* V, p. 59; mots soulignés par nous). Ici, justement, on aurait un exemple de la manière dont peuvent se contrarier certains „principes de la nature humaine”; cf. ci-dessus, n. 44.

63) Peinture, sculpture.

64) L’idée dominante du passage est l’importance, en matière de religion, des représentations sensibles.

D'où il résulte que:

„Si dans les premiers temps, un sculpteur de Syrie avait été capable de donner une juste représentation d'Apollon, la pierre conique Héliogabale, ne serait jamais devenue l'objet d'une adoration si profonde, et n'aurait jamais été acceptée comme l'image du soleil" ⁶⁵).

On ne saurait donc reprocher à Hume d'avoir esquivé, sur le plan des faits, le problème soulevé par les formes les plus frustes, les plus étranges, de l'idolâtrie. Mais peut-être la solution proposée paraîtra-t-elle singulière... Nous croyons qu'en cet endroit, se découvre une limitation — et une source d'embarras — dans les idées humiennes de la religion. Tout à l'heure, seront étudiées les objections opposées par de Brosses.

III. *Le Président de Brosses et l'histoire des religions*

Lorsque de Brosses, en 1760, parle avec modestie des „bagatelles qu'on s'avise d'écrire", c'est à seule fin de situer sur le plan d'une aimable courtoisie sa longue réponse au critique du *Mercure* ⁶⁶). Les *Dieux fétiches*, en vérité, n'ont rien d'un ouvrage frivole — rien de lourd non plus. L'auteur, en rassemblant selon un dessein raisonné, une multitude de faits ⁶⁷), espère simplement constituer le cadre d'une histoire des religions digne de ce nom ⁶⁸). La Bible surtout — citée dans la section II une vingtaine de fois — est source de première importance: la Genèse, le Livre des Rois, Ezéchiel fournissent d'irréfutables témoignages sur la présence et les formes de l'idolâtrie dans l'Orient ancien ⁶⁹).

Les *Dieux fétiches* comprennent une Introduction et trois sections:

65) *Ib.* V (p. 61).

66) *Mercure de France*, septembre 1760, p. 118.

67) Avec références aux modernes (parmi lesquels voyageurs et missionnaires) et, en proportion plus grande, aux classiques (dont Arnobe, Cicéron, Eusèbe, Hérodote, Pline, Plutarque...).

68) Il est quasi superflu de souligner que de Brosses, en renouvelant la question de l'idolâtrie spécialement, sert non seulement la cause de ce qui va être la science des religions, mais aussi celle de l'histoire tout court.

69) Le témoignage de l'Écriture était formel: par la Bible était solidement attestée l'antique réalité du culte d'objets matériels, honni des prophètes d'Israël. Selon la Sagesse, par exemple, le culte égyptien des animaux était, de toutes les idolâtries, la plus abominable. Cf. E. Dhorme, Introduction au t. II de l'*Ancien Testament* (éd. Pléiade, 1959), p. CLIX.

Section I (p. 18-65): „Du fétichisme actuel des Nègres et des autres nations sauvages”.

Section II (p. 66-181): „Fétichisme des anciens peuples comparé à celui des modernes”.

Section III (p. 182-285): „Examen des causes auxquelles on attribue le fétichisme”.

La troisième est la plus touffue, la plus vigoureuse. Aux descriptions et aux comparaisons, succède une offensive contre l'idée d'une Egypte ayant, d'emblée, possédé une „religion pure et intellectuelle” ⁷⁰), et contre les travestissements allégoriques du culte d'objets matériels. Ce culte simple et direct, donc „non relatif”, est étranger à tout raisonnement:

„Le fétichisme est du genre de ces choses si absurdes qu'on peut dire qu'elles ne laissent même pas de prise au raisonnement qui voudrait les combattre” ⁷¹).

Ces cultes concernent: animaux, pierres, arbres et plantes, fontaines, lacs, mer, fleuves et rivières, astres et soleil, feu, linguam et talismans, amulettes, instruments d'oracle ⁷²).

La considération du culte des pierres — culte commun aux Australiens, aux Nègres d'Afrique et à l'Antiquité — fut le point de départ véritable de la théorie nouvelle ⁷³). Bien que les animaux sacrés d'Egypte soient ici au premier plan, une lecture attentive atteste l'importance première du culte des pierres pour l'élaboration de l'idée de fétichisme. Il ne faut jamais oublier que les *Dieux fétiches* sont un ouvrage non seulement savant, mais aussi *novateur et polémique*; et que de Brosses, au lieu d'éviter l'éclat contre l'allégorisme, l'a recherché ⁷⁴).

70) *D. fét.*, p. 187.

71) *Ib.*, p. 183.

72) Pour: Afrique (côte occidentale, Guinée spécialement), Amérique (Canada, Brésil, etc.), Lapons, Egyptiens, Hébreux, Ethiopiens, Grecs (Section I). Et pour: Américains, Arabes, Assyrie, Babylonie, Egypte, Hébreux, Syrie, Perse, Inde, Chine, Pélagés, Grecs, Celtes, Gaulois, Germains (section II).

73) Voir de Brosses, *Histoire des navigations aux Terres australes* (1756), t. II, p. 277. Cf. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 156, et ci-dessus, n. 24. Le monde austral n'a pu trouver place dans les *Dieux fétiches*, en raison de la nouveauté de son exploration.

74) Nulle audace ne pouvait être plus grande que de s'en prendre à l'image conventionnelle de l'Egypte et aux cultes animaliers. Parler des bétyles et des âges primitifs de la Grèce ne soulevait, par contre, aucune réprobation.

Par une certaine ironie des choses, c'est avec Hume que de Brosses, au sujet de la statue et des pierres sacrées, se trouve en désaccord. On reconnaîtra dans ce qui suit, une expresse réfutation du chapitre V de l'Histoire *naturelle*:

„Je dis... que la Grèce donna dans la suite à ses vieux bêtes, les noms des dieux étrangers, que les pierres... ne représentaient rien, et qu'elles étaient *divines de leur propre divinité*. Car je ne puis être du sentiment que c'étaient des statues telles quelles, érigées aux dieux de la Grèce, dans un temps où l'on ne savait pas faire mieux... N'est-ce pas en effet trop abuser des termes que de prétendre que des pierres pyramidales, coniques ou carrées, sont des statues manquées?" 75).

A cette rectification, logiquement conforme à la caractéristique du fétichisme, s'ajoute la réaction — discrète — de de Brosses contre une conception excessivement anthropomorphique de la religion. Tout à la fin des passages repris de l'Histoire *naturelle* 76), il rapporte en effet à la „folle imagination du fétichisme", les instruments d'oracle des „jongleurs sauvages" 77). Auparavant surtout, après avoir disserté des bêtes et de la statue, et traitant de la *transition du fétichisme au polythéisme*, il discerne dans les faits étudiés, „un mélange du fétichisme et du polythéisme proprement dit, qui lui a succédé". Cette précision décisive corrige l'Histoire *naturelle* 78).

Enfin le terme d'„idolâtrie", vague sous la plume de Hume et d'autres, s'éclaire dans les *Dieux fétiches*, du fait qu'il s'applique exclusivement à des objets figurés de dimensions variées, supportant un culte. C'est ainsi que l'Introduction fait état de l'„*idolâtrie proprement dite*", en plaçant *avant* elle — selon l'ordre d'apparition des faits — le fétichisme d'abord, le culte des astres (culte direct, lui

75) *D. fét.*, p. 158 et s. (mots soulignés par nous). Déjà le P. Lafitau voyait en ces cultes le début de l'idolâtrie; v. *Mœurs des sauvages américains* (1724), t. I, „Explication" de pl. IV et p. 137 et s. Dans le même temps, Montfaucon et d'autres attribuaient un rôle initial aux statues (*L'antiquité expliquée*, 1719, t. I, XCII et XCIX).

76) Cf. ci-dessus, p. 85. Ces passages vont approximativement de p. 204 à p. 223. Ils se terminent par ces mots: „... une opinion qui, toute absurde qu'elle est, trouve pourtant sa première source dans le fond des affections générales de la nature humaine".

77) Par exemple lorsque d'anciens fétiches (animaux ou plantes) ont subsisté en restant unis à certaines divinités.

78) P. 161. Plus bas est à nouveau spécifié le caractère „secondaire en ordre de date" des divinités dont l'ensemble compose le polythéisme.

aussi) ensuite ⁷⁹⁾, une place particulière revenant à l'„idolâtrie des hommes déifiés” ⁸⁰⁾.

C'est quant à l'unité de l'humain surtout ⁸¹⁾ que se vérifie la complémentarité des *Dieux fétiches* et de l'*Histoire naturelle*. — Selon Hume, les passions primitives ne s'éteignent jamais chez l'homme, quel qu'il soit ⁸²⁾. Et „il n'est en théologie (= en religion) aucune absurdité si manifeste, qui n'ait été embrassée un jour ou l'autre par des hommes doués de l'intelligence la plus grande et la plus raffinée” ⁸³⁾. Chez de Brosses, se superpose à l'observation psychologique, l'*unité de développement de l'humanité* ⁸⁴⁾. Si Hume note, comme fait, le sens du progrès naturel de la pensée, de Brosses prend acte de la donnée du progrès prise en toute son ampleur, pour la valoriser. Bien avant Comte, se fait jour l'idée d'états successifs ⁸⁵⁾: état naturel (brut, sauvage); état „demi-sauvage”; état civilisé. La „police”, d'ailleurs — toujours *acquise* —, ne saurait faire disparaître les cultes et pratiques que maintiennent de fortes traditions: „La police n'exclut pas la superstition” ⁸⁶⁾. Ce qui revient à nier tout espoir de règne souverain, exclusif, de la raison.

Le double préjugé que, pour fonder l'histoire des religions, affrontait le Président de Brosses, était, rappelons-le, le préjugé rationaliste — solidaire de l'idée de religion naturelle qui, de l'idolâtrie, faisait une „institution dépravée”, non-primitive — et le préjugé

79) P. 12. Cf. p. 64: opposition entre „ouvrages de l'art, représentatifs d'autres objets, auxquels l'adoration s'adressait réellement”, et fétiches, productions naturelles recevant un culte direct.

80) Cf. p. 104, récapitulation des diverses sortes de cultes. Toutefois, il advient encore que, dans le feu de l'argumentation, „idolâtrie” s'étende à tout culte „déraisonnable” (p. 101, 188, etc.).

81) Sur les „deux humanités”, cf. ci-dessus, p. 83 et 84.

82) V. *Histoire naturelle*, ch. III (cf. ci-dessus, p. 85).

83) *Ib.* III (p. 104).

84) Cf. *D. fét.*, p. 193 et s.

85) Cf. M. David, *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, avril-juin 1967, p. 207 et s. Comte s'est certainement inspiré des *Dieux fétiches* ou d'un résumé de l'ouvrage. Cf. déjà G. Canguilhem, *L'aventure de l'esprit (Mélanges Alexandre Koyré)*, 1964, t. II, p. 69 et s.; et R. Aron, *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (1967), p. 100. La relation Comte-Brosses est d'importance, en dépit des ambiguïtés qu'elle présente — Comte ayant, comme l'on sait, graduellement *réélaboré l'idée de fétichisme*; peut-être y aurait-il lieu de parler de plusieurs notions du fétichisme chez Auguste Comte.

86) *D. fét.*, p. 226 et 237 et s. (d'après l'exemple offert, justement, par l'Égypte).

égyptien⁸⁷). Son arme est — comme l'indique clairement dans le titre de son livre, le mot de „parallèle” — le *procédé comparatif*, méthode dont le chercheur, de nos jours, restreint souvent l'usage⁸⁸). Mais, en l'occurrence, comment ne pas admettre la légitimité de cette intense réflexion comparatiste, accompagnée d'observations critiques et menant à des suggestions constructives?

A partir de la théorie du fétichisme et de la révision des idées sur l'Égypte, et malgré la répugnance ou l'étonnement des personnes „éclairées”, la *primitivité* devient une notion fondamentale de la nouvelle histoire des religions⁸⁹). Par la suite — après la période romantique⁹⁰), le terme de „fétiche” — avec ses implications — a été employé par maints auteurs, en divers secteurs, pour désigner les objets (*naturels*) des cultes les plus anciens des peuples étudiés⁹¹).

Les introductions bibliographiques à l'histoire des religions n'omettent certes point de citer l'*Histoire naturelle*, non plus que les *Dieux fétiches* — mais, à notre connaissance sans jamais relever la connexion entre le philosophe et l'historien⁹²) amplement attestée pourtant⁹³). Un troisième nom est encore à évoquer: celui de Bayle — en raison de l'influence exercée par celui-ci sur Hume spécialement⁹⁴).

87) Sur le „panégyptianisme”, cf. entre autres J. Solé, *Revue historique*, mars-avril 1972, p. 473 et s.

88) Cf. par ex., *Revue biblique*, 1974, n° 3, p. 477, compte rendu de l'enquête de J. Cauvin sur les cultes néolithiques syro-palestiniens: cet ouvrage, en règle générale, n'utilise „qu'à titre d'appoint” la méthode comparative.

89) Cf. C. Meiners, *Grundriss der Geschichte aller Religionen* (1785), ch. II et s.

90) Le romantisme, avec Herder, rompt avec le 18^e siècle et ses valeurs — auxquelles de Brosses demeure attaché, pourvu qu'elles n'entrent pas en conflit avec l'histoire.

91) Cf. par ex. Jean Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (1957), p. 30 et s., 66, 221 et s.

92) L'auteur des *Dieux fétiches*, comme le célèbre historien Fréret, entendait joindre histoire et philosophie (v. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 154, n. 1). Sur de Brosses, trop peu connu sous son jour véritable, v. G. Gusdorf, *Les principes de la pensée au siècle des Lumières* (1971), p. 30.

93) Cf. art. *Rev. philos.*, p. 149: important extrait de la lettre écrite par Hume à de Brosses en 1764, après lecture des *Dieux fétiches*.

94) Voir Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* (La Haye, 1964), t. II, p. 80 et s., et Bayle (1965), p. 73 et s. Cf. P. Rétrat, *Le Dictionnaire de Bayle et la lutte philosophique du 18^e siècle* (1971), p. 357: défaut d'étude approfondie sur Bayle et Hume, bien que l'influence du premier sur le second ait été considérable.

GNOSIS AND GNOSTICISM: A STUDY IN METHODOLOGY

BY

HENRY A. GREEN

St. Andrews University, Scotland

Introduction

There has been a noticeable absence in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism of a sociological perspective. With the exception of E. Michael Mendelson's paper "Some Notes on a Sociological Approach to Gnosticism" presented at the Messina Colloquium in 1966¹⁾ and Hans Kippenberg's article, "Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus" in *Numen* in 1970²⁾, sociological studies are absent³⁾. Mendelson, a professional social anthropologist, suggested for consideration a number of sociological questions but unfortunately left them unanswered. Instead he proceeded to present us with examples from his own field of research, Buddhism, as an analogous situation. His sociological analysis of Gnosticism, therefore, is severely limited and neither substantive nor theoretical. At most, we can only pay attention to his suggestion that an analysis of Gnosticism move from the ideological level of analysis to that of sectarian conflict with special consideration given to "patterns of social relations"⁴⁾. On the other hand, Kippenberg, a theologian with sociological interests, argues from a Sociology of Knowledge and Sociology of

1) E. Michael Mendelson, "Some Notes on a Sociological Approach to Gnosticism" in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, (ed.) U. Bianchi, Supplement to *Numen*, Vol. 12, (1967) pp. 668-676. (Hereinafter *Le Origini*).

2) Hans Kippenberg, "Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus" in *Numen*, Vol. 17, (1970) pp. 211-232.

3) I have recently become aware of a third sociological study entitled, *Gnostische Gemeinschaften*, a Ph. D. dissertation by Hans Kraft, University of Heidelberg in 1950 (Abstract: *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 75, (1950) p. 628) but unfortunately have not been able to obtain it. Given its early date and the nature of the abstract, I am inclined to think that its sociological content may be less than rewarding.

4) E. M. Mendelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 699-670 and 673-674.

Religion conceptual perspective and attempts to demonstrate that the ideological elements of Gnosticism are a reflection of a socio-political reality in which the Gnostics felt repressed and alienated. His thesis is that the sects of the Gnostic movement bred among the impotent Hellenized intellectual elite of the eastern fringes of the Roman Empire.

Kippenberg's argument is based on Topitsch's neo-positivist approach to ideological analysis which emphasized the ideological roots of philosophical systems ⁵). We can view Topitsch's model as a continuation of one school of German Sociology which posits that structural similarities exist between metaphysical doctrines and everyday experience and as such the former can be conceived as analogous and arising out of the latter. Kippenberg also ventures to use Eric Fromm's model which posits that every image of God is a projection of political authority ⁶). By integrating a psychological model with Topitsch's portrait of ideology, Kippenberg attempts to provide us with evidence of the ways in which ancient Gnosticism interpreted the social reality of Imperial Rome and transformed it into a new world-view for their own interpretations of God, man and the world.

Kippenberg's novel interpretation has been criticized by Peter Munz on a number of points ⁷). Methodologically Munz considers the framework of the Sociology of Knowledge to be itself ideological, and suggests as an alternative, that instead of looking from either end of the continuum, metaphysical-religious beliefs or political social experience, we explore for a missing link between social forms and thought forms ⁸). Second, Munz criticizes Kippenberg's choice of what he perceives to be the central theme of Gnosticism. Munz believes that Kippenberg's choice of the Evil Demiurge as analogous to Roman Imperial tyranny is mandatory because Kippenberg's theory posits

5) H. Kippenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214. For E. Topitsch's view see his *Sozialphilosophie zwischen Ideologie und Wissenschaft*, (Luchterhand 1961), especially pp. 261-296.

6) H. Kippenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-231. For E. Fromm's ideas see his *Das Christendogma und andere Essays*, (München 1965), especially pp. 9-91.

7) Peter Munz, "The Problem of 'Die Soziologische Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus'" in *Numen*, Vol. 19, (1972) pp. 41-51.

8) Munz's suggestion is closely aligned with that of Mary Douglas' in her book *Natural Symbols* (London 1970). Munz favours Douglas' suggestion that the human body might be that missing link, the vehicle through which social forms and religious beliefs are connected. Munz, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51.

that ideologies are constructed from human experience. On the contrary, we would argue that Munz has misinterpreted Kippenberg. It is not the Evil Demiurge that is central for the Gnostics; it is their passion for freedom through *gnosis* ⁹⁾).

Kippenberg's attempt at delimiting sociological concepts to be considered in a sociological analysis of Gnosticism must be seen in the context of an experimenter probing for new chemicals. It is due to the fact that it is pioneer work that there will be negative reactions. But this need not detract from Kippenberg's approach despite Munz's comments ¹⁰⁾. Munz could well take heed of the recommendations of Gnostic scholars regarding the need for sociological investigations notwithstanding Kippenberg's shortcomings ¹¹⁾. It is unfortunate that Kippenberg's study is the only sociological study in spite of these recommendations. Nevertheless, the frequency of their occurrence in literature about Gnosticism over the last decade indicates the increasing awareness of this deficiency on the part of Gnostic scholars. And, of course, this development has been further enhanced by 'Proposal Six' of the Messina Colloquium, a colloquium specifically focussed on Gnosticism, which stated: "the Colloquium expresses the hope that further study will deepen the... sociological aspects of the movements of Gnosticism" ¹²⁾).

Although, given the above, individuals such as Robert Haardt have

9) H. Kippenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 225. The intention of the Gnostics is "... ein herrschaftsfreies Seinsverhältnis" and "sich durch Rekurs auf seine Vernunft ausserhalb des irrationalen Machtsystems zu begeben".

10) P. Munz, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

11) For example, as early as 1963 Kurt Rudolph called for a sociological analysis with special emphasis placed on the socio-economic causes of Gnosticism ("Stand und Aufgaben in der Erforschung des Gnostizismus" in the Tagung für allgemeine Religionsgeschichte, in *Sonderheft der Wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität*, (Jena 1963) pp. 89-102). Th. P. van Baaren in a Messina paper mentioned the "... almost complete ignorance of sociological aspects of Gnostic communities" and advocated research into the consequences of Gnostic belief systems on everyday life ("Towards a Definition of Gnosticism" in *Le Origini* pp. 174-180). For a synopsis of those at Messina who individually encouraged a sociological study of the Gnostic movements, see George MacRae, "Gnosis in Messina" in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, (1966) pp. 329-330. And as recently as 1973 Petr Pokorný has recommended an examination of the social background and environment of the Gnostics ("Der Soziale Hintergrund der Gnosis" in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*, (ed.) Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, (Berlin 1973) pp. 77-88, hereinafter Tröger, *Gnosis*).

12) *Le Origini*, p. xxix.

commented with reference to those who entertain the possibility of a sociological analysis that "in der Gnosisforschung ist die Quellenlage nach wie vor so prekär, dass ein soziologischer Aufweis von Realgründen äusserst schwierig ist"¹³), this observation need not be a deterrent. For example, the absence of a sociological perspective does not deny the fact numerous scholars have attempted to take social and economic factors into account. However, instead of employing this evidence from a sociological *Weltanschauung* either theoretically or methodologically, these factors are applied only as secondary evidence¹⁴).

Given the above 'call' for a sociological analysis it seems quite apposite that a review of methodological approaches in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism be undertaken in order to assess whether a particular or distinct sociological method or theoretical perspective has indeed been attempted. This descriptive analysis will be conducted in the following manner. First a descriptive review of previous methodological studies in the analysis of Gnosis and Gnosticism will be pursued. Second, the fundamental methodological approaches of Gnostic scholars will be discussed. This section will also demonstrate that there are no intrinsic differences in the methodological approaches of students of Gnosticism. Third, the defects and limitations of this methodological approach will be analysed.

Robert Haardt and his Methodological Studies

In Gnostic research there has been no systematic attempt at describing and analysing the various methods through which scholars conduct their research, with the exception of Robert Haardt. Dr. Haardt within the last decade has presented two articles on methodology, common the second, an updated and expanded version of his original¹⁵). Both these articles can be considered on the one hand as an

13) R. Haardt, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Zeugnisse*, (Salzburg 1967) p. 25.

14) For examples of scholars who use these factors as secondary evidence, see R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, revised edition, (New York 1966) and G. Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, (Zurich 1951).

15) R. Haardt, "Bemerkungen zu den Methoden der Ursprungsbestimmung von Gnosis" in *Le Origini*, pp. 161-174 and "Zur Methodologie der Gnosisforschung" in Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 183-202. Because the second article, "Zur Methodologie der Gnosisforschung" is both more recent and exhaustive, I shall only refer to the Messina paper in passing or in footnotes. Also Dr. Haardt has a short section on methodology in the introduction of his book, *Die Gnosis: Wesen*

apology for the limitations of Gnostic research, and on the other, as a call for new methods.

Dr. Haardt begins his analysis by noting the complementary nature of the definition of Gnosis and the definition of its origin. Because of this and the fact that in Gnostic research there is no uniform conception of Gnosis, Haardt's working premise is that only through interpreting each author's definition of Gnosis and his particular development of its origin, is it possible to understand the individual methods employed¹⁶). Schematically he divides the attempts at the derivation of Gnosis and its origin into three major categories according to their function: those which argue predominately from the 'History of Motifs' and which tend towards a *regressus ad infinitum*; derivations which are 'Reductive' either in the sense of a sociological or a psychological explanation and can be considered as a special subdivision with the context of 'History of Motifs'; and finally, those which are indebted to Philosophy and especially the 'existential-ontological' interpretation¹⁷).

Dr. Haardt describes the function of the 'History of Motifs' as follows: "Die auf motivgeschichtlicher Basis arbeitende religionsgeschichtliche Methode versucht durch Aufweis historischer Affiliationen ein religiöses Phänomen zu fundieren"¹⁸). This method can be further described as the affiliation of motifs in literary texts with historical phenomena of the same culture from within which they supposedly originated. Frequently, according to Haardt, History of Religions and *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* researchers employ this method of 'History of Motifs' in their investigations when isolating themes or motifs and tracing their development. From Dr. Haardt's viewpoint, these motifs or derivations of Gnosis are intrinsically linked to "ebenfalls typisierten zeitlichen Antezedentien" such as Greek-Hellenistic, Oriental, Jewish-Orthodox, Jewish-Heterodox, Christian or combinations thereof¹⁹). In the course of his subsequent

und Zeugnisse, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-29, which is similar to the paper he presented at the Messina Colloquium.

16) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 183.

17) *Le Origini*, pp. 161-162; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 184-185. In his Messina paper Haardt considers the 'existential-ontological' method to be subsumed by the second.

18) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 191.

19) *Le Origini*, p. 161; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 184.

discussion he makes reference to scholars who argue for 'Pre-Gnosticism', 'Proto-Gnosticism' and 'classical' Gnosticism. Haardt provides numerous examples of the above temporal antecedents in conjunction with these positions: A. Harnack, F. C. Burkitt, H. A. Wolfson, C. Schneider, H. Leisegang, R. McL. Wilson and S. Pétrement under the Greek-Hellenistic category²⁰); W. Anz, W. Bousset and R. Reitzenstein under the Oriental²¹); and G. Quispel and B. K. Stürmer from Jewish-Orthodox²²). Dr. Haardt readily admits that these subdivisions within the 'History of Motifs' are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but rather are gleaned from the implicit or explicit evidence as stated by each author who believes his data has established a particular preponderance of influences. Haardt also draws our attention to the fact that many 'History of Motifs' researchers attempt to identify Gnostic motifs such as the Heavenly Redeemer in pre-Gnostic literary texts. This identification, according to Haardt, leads these researchers to claim the respective cultural backgrounds as the 'real' origin of Gnosis. Dr. Haardt again provides examples and discusses this usage of motifs, especially those of Widengren, Schmithals and Schoeps²³).

The second category of Dr. Haardt's schematization is the 'Reductive'. He describes the function of the 'Reductive' category as follows:

... unterscheiden wir gegenüber motivgeschichtlichen Rückfragen reduktiv argumentierende Ableitungen, welche den Ursprung der Gnosis durch ein Phänomen zu erklären suchen, welches selber nicht mehr der Ebene des von ihm Begründeten angehört. Der Konstitutionsprozess, der die Gnosis begründet hat, wird hier psychologisch oder soziologisch erklärt.²⁴

This description is further clarified when he discusses the 'Reductive' category's relationship to that of the 'History of Motifs':

Dabei ist es aber keineswegs so, dass die neuen Methoden die motivgeschichtlichen Methoden ausschliessen, nur kommt ihnen innerhalb der Motivgeschichte eine reduktive Funktion zu.²⁵

More simply, researchers in order to further document historical affiliations within literary contexts seek material foundations which

20) *Le Origini*, pp. 162-163; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 185-187.

21) *Le Origini*, pp. 163-164; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 187-189.

22) *Le Origini*, pp. 164-165; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 189-190.

23) *Le Origini*, p. 166; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 190-191.

24) *Le Origini*, p. 162; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 184. As mentioned previously Haardt has included the 'existential-ontological' method within this second category in his Messina paper, n. 17.

25) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 191.

have sociological or psychological overtones. According to Haardt, these overtones are

...entweder im Sinne einer wiederum gegenständlich gedachten Bedingung des Zustandekommens einer Verbindung von Motiven vorstellen (Grant, Burkitt) oder aber diesen Grund als Formprinzip auffassen, etwa im Sinne einer gnostischen Selbsterfahrung, wobei diese psychologisch verstanden ist (Puech, Quispel).²⁶

For example, from Haardt's perspective, Robert Grant combines sociological and psychological elements when he relates the collapse of Jewish apocalyptic hopes to the material conditions of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. as evidence for the origin of Gnosis²⁷). Or, for example, Quispel employs psychological evidence by integrating the fragmentation of culture in late antiquity with man's change of psyche²⁸). But despite the form of analysis, be it psychological or sociological, Dr. Haardt affirms in conclusion that "In allen diesen Fällen von psychologischer [oder von soziologischer] Reduktion ist das Grundanliegen die Synthesis der Vielfalt motivlicher Gestaltungen der Zeugnissschicht"²⁹).

The final classification of Haardt's investigation of the various methodological approaches to Gnosis is that taken from Philosophy. Dr. Haardt labels this approach the 'existential-ontological' and considers Hans Jonas to be its primary spokesman. According to Haardt, the 'existential-ontological' method is not to be viewed as contributing towards a causal analysis either in the sense of the 'History of Motifs' or the 'Reductive' methods; rather it is to be considered as a tool with which an understanding of the unique character of the state of Gnostic existence can be established. For example, whereas Bousset argues from 'History of Motifs' hypothesizing that Gnostic dualism arose from a fusion of Persian and Platonic dualism, Jonas' hypothesis would be that the Gnostic experience of self can only be interpreted by going beyond the material historical conception of Gnosis and as such, a causal analysis would be inapplicable³⁰). According to Haardt, Jonas' primary concern is to uncover the parallel intrinsic ontological structures between two chronologically removed spiritual horizons,

26) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 192.

27) *Le Origini*, p. 168; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 192.

28) *Le Origini*, pp. 167-168; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 193-194.

29) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 194.

30) *Le Origini*, p. 168; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 194-195.

that of to-day and that of the Gnostic epoch ³¹). From Haardt's viewpoint, that which contributes towards causing Gnosis in the two methods discussed above becomes for Jonas only interesting supplements arising from the Gnostic 'existential-ontological' foundation. Haardt sums up Jonas' position by stating, "Die existenzial-ontologische Analytik der Gnosis diene ihm nicht zur Kausalanalyse des Ursprungs von Gnosis" ³²), and Jonas' purpose as an attempt to explain the metamorphosis from 'mythological' to 'philosophical' Gnosis ³³).

After describing Jonas' 'existential-ontological' approach, Dr. Haardt considers several others within this category such as S. Arai, R. Bultmann, H. M. Schenke, W. Schmithals and C. Colpe ³⁴). For example, Haardt considers Bultmann within this category because he has described his own method as one which "will also nicht *historische Forschung* in dem Sinne sein, dass sie neues religionsgeschichtliches Material bringt. . . . Die Aufgabe ist vielmehr die der *Interpretation*. Gefragt wird nach dem Existenzverständnis. . . ." ³⁵). But Robert Haardt also points out that Bultmann's findings are complementary to the method of 'History of Motifs' ³⁶). In fact, Haardt asserts that many of those listed above as primarily concerned with the 'existential-ontological' mode of procedure frequently combine complementary traits as a matter of course from either the 'History of Motifs' or the 'Reductive' methods ³⁷).

Dr. Haardt in his articles also criticizes each of the above methods for what he considers to be imperfections or limitations. According to Haardt the primary limitation of the 'History of Motifs' is that it tends towards a *regressus ad infinitum* ³⁸). The researcher continually looks for the 'first' cause, the 'magic' historical moment, the 'perfect' link. In addition, this process of retracing and backdating of motifs can lead to extrapolations from different and often chronologically

31) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 194.

32) *Le Origini*, p. 168; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 194.

33) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 195.

34) *Le Origini*, pp. 169-170; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 195-198.

35) *Le Origini*, p. 169; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 196; R. Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zurich 1949) p. 8.

36) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 196.

37) *Le Origini*, pp. 170-172; Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 198-200.

38) *Le Origini*, p. 164; Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 191.

mixed texts that at best can only hint at a doubtful source. The result is that it is extremely difficult to make any definitive predictions with regard to Gnostic origins ³⁹). The 'Reductive' approach is criticized by Haardt for being tautological. Rather than applying complementary data as evidence for the origin of Gnosis, from Haardt's perspective, the criteria employed are itself a synthesis of similar data but cloaked with psychological or sociological traits ⁴⁰). And given the fact that this method has only a reductive function within the method of 'History of Motifs' as previously described ⁴¹), the criticisms for the 'History of Motifs' approach equally apply to this method. Finally, Dr. Haardt criticizes the 'existential-ontological' method for never explicitly clarifying the structures and traits of the Gnostic's unique conception of existence ⁴²). Furthermore, according to Haardt, the 'existential-ontological' approach's claim that it can in no way be derived from the 'History of Motifs' is exaggerated given its simultaneous utilization of modes of analysis from the 'History of Motifs' ⁴³).

The discussion of methodology by Robert Haardt has revealed serious limitations in the methods through which Gnosis and Gnosticism are analysed. The 'History of Motifs' is the most dominant method and the method most often criticized. Because of this fact and because the 'History of Motifs' is the basis for all the methods discussed by Haardt we wish to propose that there is at present one central method of analysis in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism, that is, the method of 'Motif Methodology'.

Motif Methodology

'Motif Methodology' can be defined as 'a scheme of classification based on dominant ideas, themes, or motifs which are rooted in the meaning of words in literary contexts, and attached by speculative thematic affiliations to cultural backgrounds'. In the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism this method is nearly exclusively employed within the following isolated contexts or combinations: '*Religionswissenschaft*', 'Religio-historical' or 'Phenomenological'. The analysis of these motifs is rooted not in notions of empirical historical human experience;

³⁹) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 191.

⁴⁰) Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 193-194.

⁴¹) See above p. 100 and n. 25.

⁴²) Tröger, *Gnosis*, p. 199.

⁴³) See above p. 102 and n. 37.

on the contrary, the 'motif methodologist' bases his analysis on abstractions of meanings taken from literary sources and their concomitant traditions, without addressing himself, for the most part, to the relationship between these non-empirical concepts and concepts of human action. The 'motif methodologist' can be distinguished by his philological, mythological or philosophical concerns, be they with or without religious overtones.

Dr. Haardt's analysis of the methodological approaches in the study of Gnosis primarily revolves around a single theme: the employment of the 'History of Motifs'. It is to this method that both his 'Reductive' and 'Philosophical' approaches are indebted for their existence. The lack of definition with regard to the particular nature of the three typological methods and the criteria with which we are to distinguish them as separate, unique methods in part contributes to our conclusion that they are essentially one and the same: that is, they all deal with the delineation and development of motifs. In addition, this lack of definition produces not only ambiguity and confusion in our appreciation of the different methods he discusses, but also prompts us to question the logical criteria on which his analysis is grounded.

Our divisions of '*Religionswissenschaft*', 'Religio-historical' and 'Phenomenological' in 'Motif Methodology' are based on epistemological and methodological criteria. The basic criteria to differentiate these three divisions are metaphysical assumptions. Ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' as defined by Dr. Pummer does not presuppose a religious faith, is an empirical science and as such is subject to the rules of the scientific method which begin with empirical documentation 44).

44) '*Religionswissenschaft*' is a German term that can denote Science(s) of Religion(s), Comparative (Study of) Religion(s), History of Religions, Religion, Religious Studies and Religiology. Because of the lack of consensus among '*Religionswissenschaft*' researchers with regard to definition, aim and epistemological foundation of their discipline, and the fact that philologists, philosophers, phenomenologists and historians, as well as social scientists and theologians, at one time or another have considered themselves to be encompassed by the discipline of '*Religionswissenschaft*', for purposes of clarification we shall distinguish those who argue theologically from '*Religionswissenschaft*' as well as those who argue phenomenologically rather than historically. Our primary criteria for this differentiation are epistemological. Nevertheless, it will become apparent in the subsequent discussion that these epistemological distinctions can not be made mutually exclusive as authors do combine complementary epistemological assumptions; rather than attempt such a comprehensive fabrication we have chosen as indicators for differentiation the fundamental metaphysical assumptions of

The 'Religio-historical' method, on the other hand, because of its theological assumptions differs from '*Religionswissenschaft*'⁴⁵). The 'Religio-historical' method is dependent on certain metaphysical as-

these researchers. For the purpose of my argument I have accepted Reinhard Pummer's definition. '*Religionswissenschaft*' is identical to the History of Religions and can be conceived as an "umbrella term for a discipline whose two intrinsic branches are: the History of Religions, in the narrow sense, that is the historical development of specific religions by the method of a horizontal cross-section or '*längsschnittmässig*', and in the broad sense, the systematic or thematic study of religious phenomena tending towards a vertical cross-section or '*Querschnitt*'" (R. Pummer, "*Religionswissenschaft* or Religiology" in *Numen*, Vol. 19, (1972) pp. 91-128, and especially pp. 102-109). Dr. Pummer's subsequent elaboration of the sub-disciplines of ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' — Phenomenology of Religion, Geography of Religion, Psychology of Religion, Sociology of Religion, Ethnology and Anthropology (p. 109f.) makes us question the viability of such a comprehensive discipline. Dr. Pummer describes these auxiliary disciplines as follows: "no matter under which category of sciences these various auxiliary disciplines of '*Religionswissenschaft*' are subsumed, one thing is generally agreed upon, the empirical character of the study undertaken by them" (p. 110). But, in addition, we would add that although all these sub-disciplines appeal to scientific empiricism neither are the individual methods identical nor are the historically conditioned traditions always complementary. Pummer, on the other hand, is aware that ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' as an autonomous discipline may not exist given the fact that, at present, '*Religionswissenschaft*' has "no common vocabulary, *Problematik*, and methodology" (pp. 108-109). It is rather an eclectic interpretation of all fields of study — philosophical, scientific or non-scientific — with reference to religion. His article, therefore, can be viewed as a 'call' on his behalf for the empirical scientific discipline of ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*'. My present task in this section is not to argue for or against the viability of such an 'open' definition of ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' or the likelihood of such an empirical autonomous discipline; rather it is only to demonstrate how scholars of Gnosticism, among many of whom identify themselves as 'historians of religions', employ the discipline of '*Religionswissenschaft*' as defined by Pummer. (See below, n. 56). It is our intention to draw attention to their historical and philological concerns which are primarily dependent on their application of motifs and by so doing bring to light the shortcomings of '*Religionswissenschaft*'s metaphysic of positivism as described by Pummer, and simultaneously substantiate our earlier claims that a Sociology of Religion *Weltanschauung* has not been exercised.

45) Although I have defined this method as 'Religio-historical' I am not concerned with New Testament scholarship that is identified by this denotation. Nor am I concerned with the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in this context. The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* is encompassed by '*Religionswissenschaft*' unless the findings have been applied as evidence for theological positions. If this has occurred these findings would be classified under the 'Religio-historical' approach according to our criteria of epistemological differentiation as explained above (n. 44). For an example of an application of evidence for theological positions see Marcel Simon, "The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, Fifty Years Later" in *Religious Studies*, Vol. 11, (1975) pp. 135-144.

sumptions and beliefs that are radically different from those of '*Religionswissenschaft*' as defined above. The results of this method, therefore, are of a different nature than the results of an investigation which does not presuppose such a religious faith. Frequently those who utilize this method are inclined towards implicit theological claims. This is not to deny that these studies contain a great deal of valuable insights which can be empirically documented; it is rather that they make use of certain concepts which are empirically unverifiable and filled with with unarguable *a priori* assumptions which have purposely been left tacit ⁴⁶). And finally our third division, the 'Phenomenological', although considered by some to be analogous to the systematic branch of '*Religionswissenschaft*' ⁴⁷), cannot be included if '*Religionswissenschaft*' is within the hermeneutic tradition ⁴⁸). 'Phenomenology' is considered to be a neutral description of phenomena as they are self-manifested with the aid of the epoché (i.e. suspension of judgment) as opposed to a pre-structured manifestation of phenomena as determined by various interpretative schemes ⁴⁹). According to C. J. Bleeker the 'Phenomenological' method "uncovers the hidden structure [of phenomena] by showing that they [i.e. the phenomena] are built up according to strict inner laws" ⁵⁰). Elsewhere he describes it as "assisting the student by giving him insight into the essence and the structure of religious phenomena" ⁵¹). It is also described as "the

46) Many who employ a 'Religio-historical' approach have very close affinities with '*Religionswissenschaft*'. It could be said that they are related and inter-dependent. The crucial criteria for differentiation are that of empirical indicators and scientific assumptions, (R. Pummer, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-102). "Theology is therefore never a 'pure' science" (R. Zwi Werblowsky, "Marburg — and After?" in *Numen*, Vol. 7, (1960) p. 220).

47) For example, see K. Rudolph, "Die Problematik der Religionswissenschaft als akademisches Lehrfach" in *Kairos*, Vol. 9, (1967) p. 30.

48) This should pose serious problems for Kurt Rudolph who advocates incorporating philosophical and historical hermeneutics into '*Religionswissenschaft*'. It is paradoxical for him to advocate an hermeneutic whose primary concern is 'interpretation' and on the other hand, conduct phenomenological studies which affirm a suspension of judgment and practise both phenomenological and eidetic reduction. See *Ibid.* pp. 22-42 and "Zur Problematik der Religionswissenschaft" in *Kairos*, Vol. 10, (1968) p. 290f.

49) A. Frazier, "Models for a Methodology of Religious Meaning" in *Bucknell Review*, Vol. 18, (1970) p. 24. See also R. Pummer, *op. cit.* and C. J. Bleeker, *The Sacred Bridge*, Supplement to *Numen*, Vol. 7, (1963).

50) C. J. Bleeker, *Ibid.* pp. 14 and 17.

51) C. J. Bleeker, "The Contribution of the Phenomenology of Religion" in

search for basic motifs or ideas" 52) or the "hinting intuitively at 'meaning'" 53). The 'Phenomenological' method, therefore, can be conceived as a non-interpretative intuitionism of essences that has close affinities to a transcendental philosophy 54). In conclusion, our three divisions of 'Motif Methodology' can be summarized as follows: Ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' appeals to scientific empiricism, 'Religio-historical' to faith and 'Phenomenological' to empathy (i.e. *verstehen*). Or put differently, ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*' appeals to the metaphysics of positivism, 'Religio-historical' to the metaphysics of theology and 'Phenomenological' to the metaphysics of idealistic philosophy.

Dr. Haardt's typological categories are neither individually unique nor epistemologically distinct. In addition, he does not consider his own methodic operation and interpretation which is dependent not only on intellectual and religious climates and his own professional training, but also on the hermeneutic situation itself as the source of assumptions for his methodological conventions. In contrast to Robert Haardt's descriptive analysis of the methodological approaches to the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism the following sections will proceed to provide evidence of the employment of 'Motif Methodology' within the three contexts outlined above.

(a) '*Religionswissenschaft*'

'*Religionswissenschaft*' is identical to the History of Religions and can be conceived as an eclectic integration of all disciplines that study religion 55). One only need examine the content of the papers delivered

Problems and Methods of the History of Religions, Supplement to *Numen*, Vol. 19, (1972) p. 44.

52) J. Waardenburg, "Religion between Reality and Idea" in *Numen*, Vol. 19, (1972) p. 200.

53) U. Bianchi, "The Definition of Religion. On the Methodology of Historical-Comparative Research" in *Problems and Methods of the History of Religions*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

54) It would seem that those who employ this method stand in a much closer relationship to Husserl than they are willing to admit. For example, see C. J. Bleeker, "The Relation of the History of Religions to Kindred Religious Sciences" in *Numen*, Vol. I, (1954) pp. 147-150. In our context 'Phenomenology' is frequently employed in conjunction with themes from Heideggerian philosophy and described as 'existential-phenomenology'. For a notable application see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, revised second edition, (Boston 1963). See below pp. 118-129.

55) See above n. 44.

at the Messina Colloquium to endorse the prevalence of this approach⁵⁶). But it will become apparent from the subsequent discussion of this method that the application of '*Religionswissenschaft*' is not identical to our definition of ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*'. The discord, in part, can be explained by the chaotic state of the discipline and the fact that 'motif methodologists', regardless of their respective approach, support their conclusions with motifs rooted in the meaning of words in literary contexts⁵⁷). Our analysis is not to discredit the value of '*Religionswissenschaft*' but rather only to bring to light the way in which Gnostic scholars make use of this approach.

One approach of '*Religionswissenschaft*' can be represented by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* or History of Religions School⁵⁸). The *Religionsgeschichtliche* formulation of myth is essentially a literary category. It applies a particular narrative which when bound together with an historical hypothesis is understood to be at the root of the phenomena. Wilhelm Bousset's *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*⁵⁹) and Richard Reitzenstein's *Poimandres* and *Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*⁶⁰) were among the earliest to utilize 'Motif

56) In fact the Colloquium was planned by the International Association for the History of Religions and was described by its primary organizer, U. Bianchi, as follows: "En effect, le Colloque de Messine a été un Colloque d'historiens des religions..." („Le Problème des Origines du Gnosticisme" in *Le Origini*, p. 1).

57) Reinhard Pummer describes the problem as follows:

... while there is virtually general agreement as to what constitutes sound scientific study of religious traditions, the area of theories and category formation in the science of religion is far from being sufficiently developed. From the questions around a definition of religion... to that of validity... and the problem of understanding and explanation in the science of religion, there is much that needs continuous rethinking.

See his "Recent Publications on the Methodology of the Science of Religion" in *Numen*, Vol. 22, (1975) pp. 162-163. Elsewhere in the same article he quotes N. Smart's comment that "for various reasons, the science of religion has heavily concentrated on literary studies" (p. 176). Also see above n. 44.

58) As mentioned previously it is important to note that Marcel Simon has recognized that the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and its findings have been applied as evidence for one or more theological positions. See above n. 45 and his "Histoire des Religions, Histoire du Christianisme, Histoire de l'Église: Réflexions méthodologiques" in *Liber Amicorum: Studies in Honour of Professor C. Bleeker*, Supplement to *Numen*, Vol. 17, (1969) p. 195.

59) Wilhelm Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, (Göttingen 1907).

60) Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, (Leipzig 1904) and *Die Hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 3rd edition, (Leipzig 1927).

Methodology'. Both scholars employed primarily philological methods in their analysis to arrive at their conclusion that Gnosis was derived from Oriental dualistic influences and pre-Christian. For example, Reitzenstein followed the classical tradition which advanced the hypothesis that Zoroaster influenced Greek thought, emphasizing the Gnostic Redeemer motif in which the *Anthropos* or Primal Man functions as a Redeemer. And by 1921 in his *Das Iranische Erlösungsmysterium* ⁶¹), Reitzenstein had developed the variant forms which this Primal Man myth had presupposed and the connections which bound the later Hellenic forms of the myth together with the original Iranian source ⁶²). G. Widengren to-day is the chief exponent of this theory of an Iranian genesis and his Messina paper can be viewed as a direct attempt to validate Reitzenstein's perspective from a History of Religions mode of analysis. Widengren concludes his paper by asserting that "les problèmes auxquels l'École de l'Histoire des Religions a travaillé se sont montrés d'une richesse qui n'est pas épuisé". ⁶³) Unfortunately, the question of chronology frequently arises with the History of Religions School as they utilize late literary sources, especially Mandaean, as evidence for Proto-Gnosticism ⁶⁴).

Th. P. van Baaren, on the other hand, differentiates between 'Gnosis' as "a certain conception of knowledge" and 'Gnosticism' as "a historic form of religion" and emphasizes the latter in any analysis. He describes his method as the following: "the method of addition and subtraction does not work in the History of Religions . . . the only way

61) R. Reitzenstein, *Das Iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, (Bonn 1921).

62) See below pp. 29-30 for a brief outline of some of the arguments for and against the much debated Redeemer motif.

63) G. Widengren, "Les Origines du Gnosticisme et l'Histoire des Religions" in *Le Origini*, p. 60.

64) See E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, (London 1973), Chapter 8, pp. 117-142 for the leading arguments that the Mandaeans had their origin in pre-Christian Palestine, especially those of K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer I: Das Mandäerproblem*, (Göttingen 1960) and "Problems of a History of the Development of the Mandaean Religion" in *History of Religions*, Vol. 8, (1969) pp. 210-235 and R. Macuch, "Der gegenwärtige Stand der Mandäerforschung und ihre Aufgaben" in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 63, (1968) pp. 5-14 and "Anfänge der Mandäer" in *Die Araber in der Alten Welt II*, (eds.) F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, (Berlin 1965) pp. 76-190. In contrast to those who argue for their origin being pre-Christian see E. Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins*, (London 1970). Also see K. Rudolph's review of Yamauchi's thesis in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 97, (1972) pp. 733-737.

[to consider] Gnosticism [is] as a historic complex belonging to a certain age and a certain place and forming a certain part of a certain culture" 65). In other words, van Baaren chooses the 'horizontal' method of History of Religions and de-emphasizes the role of dominant motifs in exchange for a positivistic metaphysic whose statements can be verified scientifically through the examination of Gnostic behavioural patterns. Unfortunately van Baaren has not implemented his own suggestions.

Another approach of 'motif methodologists' within the context of '*Religionswissenschaft*' is that forwarded by R. M. Grant and G. Quispel 66). As explained previously, Dr. Haardt has designated these studies as psychological and/or sociological 67). Although we observe psychological or sociological elements, there is no evidence of a psychological or a sociological *Weltanschauung*, either theoretical or methodological, to support Haardt's contention. Quispel, for example, claims a debt to Jungian analysis and proceeds to search for thematic religious motifs in Gnosis which to Quispel are archetypal manifestations of the 'spiritual' structure in mankind 68). The conclusion of this exploration is the definition of Gnosis as being "the mythical projection of practical experience" 69). But Quispel does not differentiate 'natural' from 'cultural' symbols and his reliance on the 'unconscious' to explain empirical phenomena brings more new questions to bear on his argument than those he has already answered. Jung's vocation was dedicated to elucidating the psychological structures of the 'unconscious'. Quispel's analysis, on the other hand, although a direct application of Jung's psychological structures to Gnosis, lacks the necessary scientific refinements from psychology to be considered positivistic. At best, Quispel's insights into the nature of the Gnostic experience must stand as only conjectural conclusions, suppositions, unsupported by empirical evidence 70).

65) Th. P. van Baaren, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

66) See above n. 14.

67) See above, pp. 100-101.

68) H. E. W. Turner in *The Pattern of Christian Truth*, (London 1954) has similarly observed Quispel's application of Jungian psychology to the problems of Gnosticism (pp. 114-117).

69) G. Quispel, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

70) In general, Quispel provides a great deal of historical evidence that Gnosticism is of Jewish origin; however it is his analysis of Gnosis as man's unconscious spirit which is related to the ground of "Being" that we are question-

In contrast to Quispel, Grant's analysis is more social-psychological than psychological. His thesis is that the roots of Gnosticism originated in the "debris of apocalyptic-eschatological hopes which resulted from the falls of Jerusalem" ⁷¹). But as with Quispel there is neither a social-scientific framework nor historical evidence. Grant's closest application of social-psychological criteria occurs when he compares the Plains Indians of nineteenth century United States to the Gnostics of the second century A. D. His conclusion from this comparison is that "when their [Jewish] warfare failed, the traditional culture became inadequate . . . [resulting in the concomitant consequences of] social maladjustment . . . , questioning of custom, social unrest, increased non-conformity, breakdown of social control and personality maladjustment" ⁷²). Unfortunately his following analysis considers motifs rather than empirical social evidence which will verify his conclusion.

The role of 'Motif Methodology' in Grant's works is much more observable in his Messina paper entitled, "Les êtres intermédiaires dans le judaïsme tardif" ⁷³). Here Grant focussed on the possibility of Jewish-apocalyptic elements being transformed into anti-cosmic dualist Gnostic motifs within heterodox Judaism. His examination included the role of angels, demons and other such intermediaries between late Judaism and Gnosticism. But as in the cases described above, his analysis considers motifs rather than employing these ideas as indicators of social consciousness or behaviour.

The last spokesman of '*Religionswissenschaft*' we shall examine is Petr Pokorný. In a recent article, "Der soziale Hintergrund der Gnosis", Pokorný argues for a non-Christian origin of Gnosis in the Hellenized Jewish Diaspora ⁷⁴). Like W. Schmithals ⁷⁵) Pokorný takes the position that Paul's opponents at Corinth were Gnostics and

ing. Phenomenologically or with the aid of Jungian archetypes this is possible; but empirically verifiable it is not. Nevertheless, Quispel's application of motifs in conjunction with historical evidence is most illuminating. For recent examples, see "The Origins of the Gnosis Demiurge" (1970) and "The Birth of the Child. Some Gnostic and Jewish Aspects" (1973) republished in G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, Vol. I, (Leiden 1974).

⁷¹) R. M. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. viii.

⁷²) *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

⁷³) R. M. Grant, "Les êtres intermédiaires dans le judaïsme tardif" in *Le Origini*, pp. 141-161.

⁷⁴) Petr. Pokorný, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵) W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, translated by J. E. Steely, (New York 1971).

suggests that the *Corpus Hermeticum* is reliable as evidence. He then attributes the origin of Gnosis to heterodox Jews who were opposed both to orthodox Judaism and to the Greek polis. Finally he combines all these divergent assumptions in an attempt to associate the libertine and mystical sects of Sabazios and Hypsistos to the libertine and mystical traits of Gnosis ⁷⁶). Like Quispel and Grant, Pokorný bases his thesis on the ideological characteristics of Gnosis rather than behavioural concepts. His analysis of trade, class and culture is superficial and his assessment of the Jewish population in Alexandria is highly conjectural to say the least ⁷⁷). Furthermore, his reconstruction of the Gnostic mystery meal can be considered as no more than the product of his fertile imagination ⁷⁸). Pokorný, we would argue, is more concerned with hypothesizing what might have been than with what did in fact occur.

We would suggest that since Quispel, Grant and Pokorný are not professionally trained psychologists or sociologists, we abstain from designating these studies as Psychological or Sociological, given the fact they do not apply normative positivistic methods or 'accepted' theories from either Sociology or Psychology, but only consider socio-cultural indicators as secondary to their 'Motif Methodology' ⁷⁹).

It is obvious from the above discussion of our representative examples that the application of the History of Religions is not identical to our definition of ideal '*Religionswissenschaft*'. We observed that the primary concern of these studies emphasized motifs in literary contexts rather than social relationships or social structures. In other words, we understand these studies to be philological and historical, not positivistic and humanistic. Our analysis attempted only to discuss the way in which Gnostic scholars make use of this approach. Nevertheless, it strongly confirms Dr. R. Pummer's 'call' that '*Religionswissenschaft*' become an empirical scientific discipline ⁸⁰).

76) Petr Pokorný, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

77) *Ibid.*, p. 86.

78) *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

79) Dr. Pummer also maintains that theological statements or philosophical statements that make use of psychological or sociological terminology cannot be called Psychology of Religion or Sociology of Religion '*Religionswissenschaft*' or Religiology, *op. cit.* (p. 110). With reference to Quispel we are more tolerant, given the fact that Jungian analysis even if 'mystical' is also considered acceptable in some circles of Psychology.

80) See above n. 44.

(b) 'Religio-historical'

As explained previously, many of the scholars who study Gnosis and Gnosticism have implicit theological assumptions although they employ similar methods to those of 'Religionswissenschaft' ⁸¹). For example, R. P. Casey in an article entitled, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament" argues that Gnosticism is a second century Christian heresy by evoking the 'true' message of the New Testament ⁸²). In this section we shall examine three proponents of this approach, Cardinal Jean Daniélou, Professor R. McL. Wilson and Professor R. Bultmann and elucidate their methodology.

Cardinal Daniélou's thesis is that Gnosis had its *Sitz im Leben* in a Christian setting inspired by Jewish-Christian apocalyptic motifs. In order to understand this conclusion, Daniélou's position must be viewed in the light of his most important work, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* ⁸³). In this study Daniélou postulates that historically there existed a particular Jewish-Christian thought system expressed in the motifs of late Judaism which became the sub-structure of early Christianity. His thesis on Gnosis, therefore, is a sub-theme of his *magnum opus*. Daniélou's conclusion rests on doctrinal criteria, the examination of the New Testament, Patristic, Apocryphal and Gnostic literary genres which exhibit Jewish-Christian content.

In opposition to Daniélou's thesis, R. A. Kraft has commented, "Daniélou's theology of Jewish-Christianity seems to be an idealistic abstraction . . . without special regard for the question of whether any actual person or group of persons ever consciously adhered to such a 'theology' " ⁸⁴). And A. F. J. Klijn, while crediting Daniélou for his documentation and analysis of early Jewish influence on nascent Christianity, emphatically states, "that it is impossible to define the term Jewish-Christian because it proved to be a name that can readily be replaced by 'Christian' " ⁸⁵). Furthermore, Daniélou's acceptance at

⁸¹) See above n. 46.

⁸²) R. P. Casey, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament" in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, (eds.) W. D. Davies and D. Daube, (Cambridge 1956) pp. 52-81.

⁸³) J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish-Christianity*, translated by J. H. Baker, Vol. I, (London 1964).

⁸⁴) R. A. Kraft, "In Search of 'Jewish-Christianity' and its Theology" in *Judéo-Christianisme*, (Paris 1972) p. 86.

⁸⁵) A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish-Christianity" in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 20, (1974) p. 426.

face value or apologetically of Patristic literature with regard to the Gnostics and his implicit theological status provide us with evidence of his metaphysics of theology ⁸⁶).

Professor R. McL. Wilson's book, *Gnosis and the New Testament* can be appreciated as an unparalleled example of the application of 'Motif Methodology' ⁸⁷). Within the first several pages he immediately begins to discuss several key problems in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism and writes, "Gnosticism is fundamentally syncretistic.... It would be more accurate to recognize the various 'spheres of influence' mentioned as the *ultimate* sources of particular ideas, and proceed to the attempt to trace the channels by which they passed into the developed Gnostic systems" ⁸⁸). Elsewhere he states his procedure as thinking "...in terms of growth and development... [of] the combination of ideas, the way in which they are blended together, the associations which they come to have..." ⁸⁹) Wilson's compact, lucid monograph provides the reader with numerous examples of some of the motifs which have been claimed as Gnostic in the New Testament, and on the other hand, Gnostic use of New Testament motifs. For example, when discussing the classic motif of the pearl he cites *The Gospel of Philip*, "Logion 48", Irenaeus' account of the system of Ptolemy and Plotinus ⁹⁰). He then comments on this motif's affinity to "Logion 29" of *The Gospel of Thomas* and 2 Corinthians 4:7 and asks:

...are all these to be grouped together and classified as 'Gnostic'? Or should we not rather recognize the occurrence of a common motif, which may or may not have passed from one tradition to another, and proceed to examine the use that is made of it in different contexts ⁹¹).

R. McL. Wilson's premise is that one must begin one's investigation with the historical movement of 'classical' Gnosticism of the second century A. D. and, avoid the reading back into first century terminology

⁸⁶) For example, in his discussion of the relevance of the message of Jewish-Christianity for to-day (*op. cit.*, p. 408) or in his definition of Gnosis as "The saving knowledge of what the divine action proclaimed in the Gospel message..." (p. 405).

⁸⁷) R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, (Oxford 1968).

⁸⁸) *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁹) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹⁰) *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁹¹) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

...associations and connotations which that terminology does have in the second century A.D., and at the same time to recognize, already in the first century, the points of growth for second century theories ⁹²).

His corpus of studies affirms the validity of this position.

Similar to Daniélou, affirmations of faith are influential in his analysis. For example, in his conclusion to his chapter on Gnostic use of the New Testament he describes the difference between the Church's legitimation and that of the Gnostics as one of control—

such a writer as Irenaeus is governed by the Church's Rule of Faith, whereas the Gnostics endeavour to mould the Scriptures to their own theories... There is all the difference in the world between an interpretation that is brought to the text from without and one which emerges from the text itself ⁹³).

Surely the Gnostics had their own controlling structures within their various schools. And what is the correct interpretation given the historical evidence that conceptual similarities between various early Christian writings and movements are tainted by later theological judgments regarding Orthodoxy, heterodoxy and heresy? In addition, an orthodox Jew can similarly inquire about "interpretations from within or without" ⁹⁴). Although Professor Wilson's application of 'Motif Methodology' has very close affinities with the method of '*Religionswissenschaft*' his results are of a different nature than those who employ the History of Religions method.

The third and last theologian we shall examine is Rudolph Bultmann. Unlike Daniélou who postulates motifs within a Jewish-Christian context or Wilson who emphasizes the social movements of Gnosticism and their particular application of Gnostic and New Testament motifs, we consider Bultmann's studies as an attempt to validate the German view of Gnosis. This position assumes that Gnosis is essentially a non-Christian movement which manifested itself in numerous geographical locations and which both preceeded and influenced Christianity. Bultmann, for example, in his book, *The Theology of the New Testament*, adopts this view and devotes an entire section to an analy-

⁹²) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹³) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁹⁴) Elsewhere R. McL. Wilson comments that although "the Gnostics often adhere to the literal words of Scripture... the Gnostic theories [are] not the plain meaning of the Biblical text" (*Ibid.*, p. 76). Again a Jew can well ask, 'are the Christian theories the plain meaning of the Old Testament texts'?

sis of Gnostic motifs, attempting to provide evidence of Gnostic influence on the early Church and of Gnostic motifs in the New Testament ⁹⁵).

As we have already seen to be the case with our discussion of Daniélou, Bultmann's analysis of Gnosis can only be understood within the context of his faith and methodology, but unlike the former's historical context, Bultmann's is philosophical. Bultmann perceives his task as that of producing an existentialist interpretation of the New Testament, of demythologizing it, and of providing an hermeneutic that is grounded within an universal human anthropology ⁹⁶). Because demythologizing employs the existential meaning of myth and not the *Religionsgeschichtliche* formulation it is necessary that first we clarify his debt to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. According to R. Johnson, "through Reitzenstein, Bultmann had learned to understand myth as a soteriological narrative; that is, the story of Primal Man or Heavenly Redeemer as this originated in the dualistic religion of Iran and was then appropriated by a variety of Hellenistic religions . . . including Christianity" ⁹⁷). Thus Bultmann could argue that the myth of the Redeemer was pre-Christian and simultaneously denoted the form through which the faith of the early Christian movement first came to expression ⁹⁸). He therefore can write, "of all the mythological influences on the New Testament, the strongest is the oriental-gnostic salvation myth which, so far as we can see, goes back to the Iranian myth of the Primal Man" ⁹⁹). But with the adoption of Heidegger's anthropological categories Bultmann began to move toward an existentialist interpretation of Hellenistic myths as an expression of existence and away from the *Religionsgeschichtliche* narrative. Heidegger's

95) Rudolph Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament*, translated by K. Grobel, Vol. I, (London 1952) pp. 164-183. The primary motifs he discusses are those of *pneuma*, eschatology, the cosmic drama, Primal Man and redemption.

96) This interpretation of Bultmann's task is from 1941 onwards. For a detailed discussion of the various stages of Bultmann's fundamental philosophical-theological position and his historical situation see Roger A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing*, Supplement to *Numen*, Vol. 28, (1974).

97) *Ibid.*, p. 89.

98) For Bultmann's analysis see "Urchristliche Religion (1915-1925)" in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, Vol. 24 (1926) pp. 83-164, and especially pp. 100-102.

99) As quoted in R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 102. For Bultmann's original see "Mythus und Mythologie im Neuen Testament" in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edition, (Tübingen 1930) col. 393.

existential analysis of the ontological structures of "Being" allowed Bultmann the opportunity to address himself to the question of the unique anthropological character of the Christian understanding of human existence. And, soon after, Jonas' idealistic schema of history in conjunction with Heidegger's *Daseinanalytik* provided the historical application of the existentialist hermeneutic with regard to Gnosticism and the ordering of the data of the Hellenistic world. This indebtedness to Jonas can be no more clearly observed than in the preface to Jonas' *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, Volume I, where Bultmann writes, "the method of the author, that of apprehending the authentic meaning of an historical phenomenon through the principle of existential analysis, appears to me to have proven its fruitfulness here" ¹⁰⁰). And this statement is immediately followed by Bultmann's theological concern that "this work will fructify the *geistesgeschichtliche* research . . . in the sphere of New Testament interpretation" ¹⁰¹).

On the other hand, Bultmann never abandons Reitzenstein's reconstructed Iranian prototype myth in his analysis of the origins of New Testament mythological motifs. On the contrary, Bultmann implicitly presupposes the substance of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* view of myth and acknowledges the Primal Man of Iran as the pre-Christian Gnostic myth of the Heavenly Redeemer ¹⁰²). The emphasis has transferred from Reitzenstein's reconstructed Iranian prototype to Jonas' *Geist* of Gnosticism. The unique character of the Christian understanding of existence has come to mean faith as the authentic resolution to the human condition.

According to Johnson, Bultmann's interpretation of the Hellenistic age necessitates the decisive role of Gnosticism in establishing the fundamental structure of New Testament self-understanding in the history of *Dasein's* self-understanding. Although Gnosticism shares an ontological continuity with the ontic Christianity differentiation be-

¹⁰⁰) As quoted in R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 116. For Bultmann's original see "Vorwort" in *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* by Hans Jonas, 2nd edition, Vol. I, (Göttingen 1954) p. vii.

¹⁰¹) *Ibid.* This hope is later manifested by Bultmann himself. See *Kerygma Myth*, edited and translated by R. H. Fuller, 2 Volumes, (London 1957-1962). He specifically states his task as follows: "to produce an existential interpretation of the dualistic mythology of the New Testament along similar lines to that of Hans Jonas' existentialist interpretation of Gnosticism". p. 16.

¹⁰²) R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

tween them radically separates them. Gnosticism neither apprehended the dialectical nature of this new relationship of *Dasein* to its world nor realized in faith the eschatological existence. The results of these misinterpretations were speculative knowledge or mystical experience. Christianity, on the other hand, actualized in Christian faith the new understanding of self and world, grounded in the believer's "being known by God" ¹⁰³). Demythologizing as understood by Johnson has come to mean "a systematic extension . . . of the doctrine of justification of faith . . . and justification of faith means literally a new form of self-understanding" ¹⁰⁴). From the above discussion it is obvious that Bultmann both has employed motifs and has argued from a metaphysic of theology.

(c) '*Phenomenological*'

The 'Phenomenological' method in our context attempts to identify and associate religious movements together on the basis of their common elements in the hope that structural universal laws can be postulated. This approach is inclined towards an existential analysis or has certain similarities to that of the systematic branch of '*Religionswissenschaft*' ¹⁰⁵). There are numerous Gnostic scholars who adopt this position including Hans Jonas, U. Bianchi, C. J. Bleeker and K. Rudolph. In this final section we shall describe Jonas' contribution as representative because of the influence that has been generated by his 'existential-phenomenological' analysis.

As previously alluded to Jonas was extremely important in the development of Bultmann's existential hermeneutic. He was a student of Bultmann and Heidegger at Marburg and came to know the world of Hellenistic religions and myths through the former and the nature of *Dasein* through the latter. As early as 1930 Jonas had begun to analyse the relation of the objectivation of myth to the existentialist root of myth in Gnosis ¹⁰⁶) and by 1934 had published the first volume

¹⁰³) *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁰⁴) *Ibid.*, pp. 197 and 201.

¹⁰⁵) For not including 'Phenomenology' within 'Religionswissenschaft' see above, pp. 103-106, especially n. 44 and n. 48 and our contention that the metaphysics of '*Religionswissenschaft*' are materialistic and are objectively orientated whereas those of 'Phenomenology' are idealistic and subjectively orientated.

¹⁰⁶) H. Jonas, "Einleitung: Zum Problem der Objektivation und ihres Formwandels" in *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p. 1-23. Originally this was published as *Der Begriff der Gnosis*, (Göttingen 1930).

of his revolutionary epic on Gnosticism¹⁰⁷). Philosophically Jonas' aim was to relate Heideggerian existentialism in conjunction with the historical idealism of Hegel to Gnosticism in order to explain the objectivation of *Geist*. Existentially, his aim was "to understand the spirit speaking through these [philosophical] voices and in its light to restore an intelligible unity to the baffling multiplicity of its [i.e. Gnostic] expressions"¹⁰⁸). Jonas' concern therefore was not the 'origins' of Gnosis in the sense of a genealogical line of descent; rather it was with the 'essence' of Gnosis¹⁰⁹). His method also involved the delineation of motifs, not in an historical context, but supported by a comparative-phenomenological foundation¹¹⁰).

Accepting Hegel's interpretation of history as the history of *Geist* expressed dialectically, Jonas proposed that the Hellenistic period was crucial in the dialectical development of *Geist*. According to Jonas, although Hellenistic literature dramatizes the fundamental new self-understanding of *Geist* in history this new self-understanding appears in a form antithetical with its own intention. It is only due to the fact that Jonas presupposes a continuity between the original existential phenomena and his own existence because of their mutual participation in a common history of *Geist* that we are able to interpret this new self-understanding of *Dasein*. Furthermore, not only does Jonas perceive a relationship of existential continuity, mediated through a common history of *Geist*, he also assumes that we are better able to interpret what the author of Hellenistic texts meant than the author himself could because we are situated in a more fully developed moment of *Geist*. Thus it is not the texts themselves or the data of history that are important to Jonas — "now this we understand not as some kind of empirical subject . . .", rather it is "a transcendent constitutive which, however, is rooted in a factual historical apprehension of *Dasein*"¹¹¹). The texts of the Hellenistic age initiate a new epoch

107) H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, op. cit., Vol. I.

108) H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, op. cit. p. xvii.

109) Colpe proposes the concepts of 'origins' and 'essence' as descriptive of the distinction between the 'Religionsgeschichtliche' approach to Gnosticism and that of Jonas' existential. See C. Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes von gnostischen Erlösmythus*, (Göttingen 1961) p. 201.

110) Hans Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon — typological and historical" in *Le Origini*, pp. 92-109.

111) As quoted in R. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 227-228. For Jonas' original see *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 12-13.

of *Dasein* which stand in contrast to the previous Hellenic and Hebrew forms of self-understanding ¹¹²).

Although Jonas' method provides valuable insights into Gnostic forms of existence we question his imposition of twentieth century conceptual formulations on thought patterns of two thousand years ago. Does twentieth century nihilism have the same meaning to Gnosticism as twentieth century nihilism to twentieth century Existentialism? Is Jonas' hypothesis that "the 'existentialist' reading of Gnosticism . . . invites as its natural complement the trial of a 'gnostic' reading of Existentialism" possible? ¹¹³). Can 'anthropological acosmism arise' ¹¹⁴) from any cosmic nihilism because of man's alienation from nature? Does every cosmic nihilism beget the characteristics through which Existentialism might evolve? Does his use of historical idealism with reference to the history of *Geist* really give us a superiority over the original author in interpreting the text? And finally, can anyone intuit these 'essences' through the application of his 'existential-phenomenological' method because we also mutually participate in a common history of *Geist*?

Although we are sympathetic to Jonas' contention that man's perception of his ontological foundation was radically transformed two thousand years ago, the question that must be posed is, 'can semantic structures be found for historical events that evolve within different locations, at different times and in different ways'? It is worthwhile before passing judgment to keep in mind R. McL. Wilson's comment that

from a phenomenological point of view it may be perfectly legitimate to group religious [and philosophical] movements together on the basis of their common elements; but this does not necessarily mean that these movements stand in any genetic relationship or that there is any direct connection between the earlier and the later ¹¹⁵).

(d) *Gnosis and Gnosticism*

In the above three contexts of 'Motif Methodology' we have observed that Gnostic scholars whatever their approach might be — pre-Chris-

¹¹²) The above analysis of Jonas' interpretation of history as the history of *Geist* has been borrowed from R. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-231.

¹¹³) Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

¹¹⁴) *Ibid.* See Epilogue, "Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism", pp. 320-340.

¹¹⁵) R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

tian Gnosticism, Gnosticism as a second century heresy, or the simultaneous development of Gnosticism and Christianity without dependence on the other for origin — employ this general methodology. Frequently individual methods overlap and it is not uncommon for a Gnostic researcher to employ two of the methods discussed above simultaneously. For example, Bultmann uses both the 'Religio-historical' and 'Phenomenological' methods. Our classification has chosen the more dominant traits of an author's method and has categorized him accordingly. It is our opinion that the primary characteristic of differentiation is metaphysics which distinguishes one author from another and one method from another where a particular author employs both. Given the nature of our study it is impossible to eliminate all combinations of the above methods; rather we feel that it is more legitimate and beneficial to be aware of the different shades in the modes of analysis, and not offer a methodological panacea. Our classification has attempted only to make the reader aware of the dominance of 'Motif Methodology' and to inaugurate a 'call' for established criteria in Gnostic analysis. The combination of methods within 'Motif Methodology' will continue to exist as long as the central concern of each method is the development of motifs in literary contexts.

Part of the ambiguity and confusion generated by 'Motif Methodology' in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism can be alleviated through explicit definitions such as those proposed and agreed upon at the Messina Colloquium for Gnosis, Gnosticism, Pre-Gnosticism and Proto-Gnosticism¹¹⁶). In addition, Wilson's differentiation between motifs employed 'descriptively' or 'derivatively' can further aid us in our conceptual clarification¹¹⁷). Nevertheless, innumerable unquestioned historical answers will remain alongside, with further methodological enigmas. It is our belief that if we are to modify the present state of Gnostic research as described by Dr. Haardt—"in der historischen Erforschung der Gnosis nimmt die Motivgeschichte den breitesten Raum ein"¹¹⁸) — we must proceed towards the implementation of alternative methodologies. It is time that we begin to pay more attention to Wilson's cue that "we must continually ask whether

116) *Le Origini*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

117) R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

118) R. Haardt, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Zeugnisse*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

we are in fact asking the proper questions or drawing the correct conclusions from our data . . . " 119). To this we should add whether we are in fact using all methodologies available and applicable.

Defects of 'Motif Methodology' 120)

In the above section on 'Motif Methodology' we have described the application of '*Religionswissenschaft*', 'Religio-historical' and 'Phenomenological' methods in several contexts. Also we have accounted for the approaches of numerous Gnostic scholars and commented on their particular mode of analysis. The purpose of this section will be to consider the limitations and short-comings of 'Motif Methodology'.

Dr. Haardt has criticized the 'History of Motifs' methods for objectifying types of evidence identifiable in terms of literary-historical attitudes. According to Haardt, this procedure involves the assumption of causal connections between these imaginative fabrications without the necessary evidence of how the original objectifications occurred 121). In sociological terminology this means that the motifs, which were originally abstracted from reality as constructs for descriptive purposes, have become *reified* and are taken as objective, concrete aspects of reality although historically or empirically non-existent 122). The particular danger of *reification* is that the motif or construct readily becomes hypostatized into an entity and the investigator duly sets out in quest of the motif or idea he has fabricated 123). The result of this approach yields a form of non-history

119) R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

120) For a general critique of the history of ideas to which I am indebted for numerous arguments, see Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" in *History and Theory*, Vol. 8 (1969) pp. 3-53. For a critique of Skinner's position see Bhikhu Parekh and P. N. Berki, "The History of Political Ideas: A Critique of Q. Skinner's Methodology" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 34 (1973) pp. 163-184.

121) R. Haardt, *Die Gnosis: Wesen und Zeugnisse*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

122) *Reification* can be defined as 'the converting of an abstract concept into a materialized, empirical object'. It also has the connotation in Sociology of 'assuming that the concept is something other than the product of human activity'. See Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (New York 1967) pp. 89-92.

123) R. McL. Wilson in *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, addresses himself more generally to the problem when discussing the comments of A.

which is almost entirely given over to pointing out earlier 'anticipations' from subsequent evidence. In our analysis, *refication* not only applies to Haardt's 'History of Motifs' but also to 'Motif Methodology' in general.

C. Colpe, for example, in his enlightening criticism of the *Religions-geschichtliche Schule* demonstrates how Reitzenstein and Bultmann, among others, have *reified* the Gnostic Redeemer myth¹²⁴). Colpe describes how there never was any textual evidence to support the existence of a pre-Christian, archetypal Redeemer myth and that there were also unresolved problems in the dating and origins of the texts cited as evidence for this hypothesis. His conclusion is that the so-called pre-Christian Iranian myth of the Heavenly Redeemer is actually a post-Christian creation. In other words, the motif has been *reified* by particular researchers without acknowledgement that it is in reality non-existent.

For example, Bultmann originally argued that the Gospel of John presupposes this Redeemer myth by postulating that the Mandaeans originated as a group of adherents of John the Baptist and suggested textual parallels from Mandaean and Manichaean literature, the Odes of Solomon and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles as evidence¹²⁵). And later, after the adoption of his existential hermeneutic, he no longer speaks of several sources but nevertheless, does not desert Reitzenstein's basic historical hypothesis. Agreeing with Colpe, we would argue that Bultmann's hypothesis rests on highly conjectural references from literary pieces of evidence that are of considerably late origin and therefore is no more than a hypostatization of his own

Richardson with reference to the hypostatization of a pre-Christian Gnosticism. Wilson quotes Richardson's conclusion: "we are in danger of hypostatizing certain rather ill-defined tendencies of thought and then speaking as if there were a religion or religious philosophy called Gnosticism, which could be contrasted with Judaism or Christianity. There was of course no such thing". (pp. 9 and 34).

¹²⁴) C. Colpe, *op. cit.*

¹²⁵) R. Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums" in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*, Vol. 24 (1925) pp. 100-146. Also see his commentary on *The Gospel of John*, translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray et al., (Oxford 1971) where he assumes the Gnostic myth as the background of the Gospel. With regard to Mandaean arguments see above, n. 64.

invention. Colpe describes this process of *reification* in the following way:

Das Modell 'gnostischer Erlöser-mythus' ist insofern richtig, als sich alle Vorstellungen, die in das Modell integriert sind, aus Systemen, wie wir sie uns eben vergegenwärtigt haben, auch wirklich belegen lassen. Und als eine moderne Konstruktion aus Mosaiksteinchen verschiedenster Herkunft braucht man es deshalb nicht abtun, weil es sich im grossen und ganzen, abgesehen vom Erdenwandel und der Weihestiftung des 'Urmensch-Erlösers', mit dem manichäischen System deckt. Problematisch an diesem Modell ist, dass in seinem 'Mythus'-Begriff alle Bedeutungen mitschwingen, die dieses Wort im Verlauf der Religions- und Philosophiegeschichte gewonnen hat und die die Religionsphänomenologie ausbreitet. Direkt falsch an diesem Modell scheint mir zu sein, dass es de facto mit dem ganzen Anspruch archaischen Gewichtes belastet ist, als sei der gnostische Erlösermythus irgendwann in grauer Vorzeit entstanden, irgendwo im fernen weiten Orient, den man sich nur wenig genauer als 'Iran' vorzustellen hat, dann durch Raum und Zeit gewandert, um bald in diesem, bald in jenem Überlieferungskreise, z.B. in der Weisheitsdichtung, bei Philo, in den Adams-spekulationen und in der Apokalyptik, einige Mosaiksteinschen zu hinterlassen, dann in Manichäismus noch einmal zu grandioser Einheit zusammengewachsen und bei den Mandäern endgültig in seine Bestandteile zerfallen¹²⁶).

Bultmann is not alone in hypostatizing a pre-Christian Gnostic Redeemer myth. Kurt Rudolph is also of the opinion that the Gnostic Redeemer myth is of pre-Christian origin and adduces Mandaean literature as proof¹²⁷). And W. Schmithals, a Bultmannian disciple, admits that the Gnostic Redeemer myth is the result of a combination of two pre-Christian different myths but does not pause to ask when, where and by whom did this combination occur¹²⁸).

In order to avoid this problem the student of Gnosticism must continually be aware that the particular idea he is discovering is only a construct — that is, a heuristic device, a tool for analysis which at best can only describe, not explain. Furthermore, the application of a construct in research, if to prove profitable, must be developed not only in relation to the cultural backgrounds from which it is hypothesized, but also in accordance with strict methodological rules¹²⁹).

126) C. Colpe, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

127) See above n. 64.

128) W. Schmithals, *op. cit.* Also see *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church*, translated by J. E. Steely, (New York 1969). R. McL. Wilson has made a similar observation in *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

129) For a discussion of these methodological rules see C. G. Hempel, "Typological Methods in the Social Sciences" in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: A Reader*, (ed.) M. Natanson, (New York 1963) pp. 210-231.

Only then the possibility of postulating causal connections through the use of *reified* constructs, and at the expense of historical data, becomes feasible, even if still highly tenuous ¹³⁰).

Second, many researchers search for the motif they expect to find. When analysing New Testament, Patristic, Apocryphal and Gnostic literature, Bultmann, in the above example, looked for the myth of the Redeemer. Others such as R. M. Grant search for eschatological-apocalyptic hopes in late Judaism, and W. Schmithals looks for motifs of "*gnosis*" in the New Testament ¹³¹). The result is that there is the danger of converting ambiguous, vague or allegorical remarks by a Gnostic into the investigator's Gnostic motif.

Bultmann, for example, attempts to demonstrate that Paul had used Gnostic terminology and to "some extent the vocabulary and approach of the Gnostics" ¹³²). He assumes that the terminology of Colossians (eg. 2:3) and Ephesians (eg. 3:19) was fashioned in opposition to Gnosticism and that I Corinthians 1:17f., 6:12f., and 8:1f. prove that Paul's opponents at Corinth had been a movement of

¹³⁰) For arguments against a pre-Christian Gnostic Redeemer myth see H. M. Schenke, *Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis*, (Göttingen 1962) who argues that there was no Redeemer myth as a totality until Manicheism, the final integration being a result from a long process of growth and development. Recently Schenke has re-examined his position and his conclusions stand in sharp contrast to his earlier position focussing on the fact that there is no Gnosis without a Redeemer. And Schenke's conclusion is still antithetical to that of Bultmann's. See "Die neutestamentliche Christologie und der gnostische Erlöser" in Tröger, *Gnosis*, pp. 205-231. Also see Petr Pokorný, *Die Epheserbrief und die Gnosis: Die Bedeutung des Haupt-Glieder-Gedankens in der entstehenden Kirche*, (Berlin 1965) who develops the theme of an *Anthropos* myth which is rooted to Jewish speculation. Quispel, likewise, emphasizes the Jewish roots of the Redeemer myth. In an article entitled, "Der gnostische Anthropos und die jüdische Tradition" in *Gnostic Studies*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-195 Quispel concluded his argument as follows: "Und vollends hat die Gnosis, soweit wir sie bisher kennengelernt haben, keine Erlösergestalt gekannt.... Wenn es auch vielleicht eine vorchristliche Gnosis gab, so doch nimmermehr einen vorchristlichen gnostischen Erlöser" (p. 195). Others such as R. P. Casey, *op. cit.*, and C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge 1953), specifically attack Bultmann's thesis. For a general review of the arguments and the literature see C. Colpe, *op. cit.* and E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-35, 29-34 and 163-169.

¹³¹) For Grant see above, p. 112; for Schmithals, see *Gnosticism in Gorinth*, *op. cit.*

¹³²) See the article by Bultmann in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (ed.) G. Kittel, translated by G. W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1964), Vol. I, p. 709.

Gnostic "*pneumatics*"¹³³). Similarly, Schmithals views the opponents of Paul at Corinth as Gnostic and considers certain motifs of Philipians, Galatians, I and II Thessalonians as evidence that Paul was combatting Gnosticism¹³⁴). Although one cannot discount this argument outright, the historical evidence does not warrant such a conclusion¹³⁵).

There are also authors who interpret the history of the period under consideration according to the particular historical motif they expect to discover. In the analysis of events that coincided with the rise of Christianity and Gnosticism, Tacitus' remarks about Nero's persecution of Christians¹³⁶) for example, have led G. E. M. de Ste. Croix to postulate that the sole reason Christians were persecuted as early as 64 A. D. was for their name¹³⁷). Alternatively, these remarks by Tacitus are more frequently interpreted only as indicating that Christians were persecuted by Romans as scapegoats for Nero's domestic and international failures¹³⁸). Frend even goes one step further than G. E. M. de Ste. Croix and postulates that the persecutions of Christians from Nero onwards in the Roman Empire failed because the Church provided country folk with "social justice and freedom . . . [and] gave direction to an otherwise confused mass of economic, social and religious discontents"¹³⁹). In this example, history, rather than providing empirical evidence for feasible casual connections as to why the Christians were persecuted, is employed as a tool for polemics and as a medium for social Christian theology.

On the other hand, rather than crediting a Gnostic or New Testament writer with a meaning he could not have intended to convey, the Gnostic researcher might read into the motif more than what is stated or implied. Van Groningen's study of first century Gnosticism

133) *Ibid.*, p. 709.

134) W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, *op. cit.*, and *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen*, (Hamburg 1965).

135) C. Colpe, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 and 147.

136) Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, Bk. 15: 44.

137) G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted" in *Past and Present*, No. 26, (1963) pp. 6-39.

138) For views expressing the contrary to Ste. Croix's perspective see, for example, A. N. Sherwin-White's article, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted: An Amendment" in *Past and Present*, No. 27, (1964) pp. 23-27.

139) W. H. C. Frend, "The Failure of the Persecutions in the Roman Empire" in *Past and Present*, No. 16, (1959) p. 24.

reads into Hellenism "a scientific impulse" and states that "the very nature of Gnosticism itself suggests a very strong prevailing spirit of scientism" ¹⁴⁰). Jonas reads twentieth century nihilism into second century Gnosticism and Bultmann, accepting Reitzenstein's analysis, accounts for Gnostic dualism through Oriental influence ¹⁴¹).

Conceptual clarification and the ability of the investigator to differentiate between a Gnostic motif that is being 'descriptively' employed and one that is a 'derivation' from a pre-Christian Gnosis would be most useful in rectifying this shortcoming. Reading more into the data than is empirically observable is as serious a fault as discovering a pre-conceived motif that is expected to appear, regardless of the fact of its spuriousness.

The third limitation of 'Motif Methodology' is closely affiliated to scholars' exploration for their 'expected' motifs discussed directly above. Discussion of motifs frequently degenerates into a debate about whether the given motif in question 'really emerged' at a given time or whether it is 'really there' at all in any form in the New Testament, Patristic, Apocryphal, Pseudepigraphic, Qumran or Gnostic literature. This pursuit for a given motif has affinities with what Dr. Haardt has designated as a *regressus ad infinitum* ¹⁴²). The search for the 'first' cause is no more or less than attempting to discover the 'real' moment a particular motif emerged in a particular text or at a particular time, *ad infinitum*. For example, Van Groningen's 'first' motif is 'scientism', Bousset's and that of many of his disciples in the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* 'dualism' and Grant's 'apocalypticism'. Reductive hypotheses may be necessary given the nature of our data but are not sufficient for a study of Gnosis and Gnosticism. We must remind ourselves of Van Baaren's comment at the Messina Colloquium with regard to reductive hypotheses: "Gnosticism is only partly determined by the elements [i.e. motifs] it contains, but mostly by the way in which they function together forming an integrated whole" ¹⁴³).

Fourth, most Gnostic writers were themselves inconsistent in their description of their religion or in the use of their ideas. For example

¹⁴⁰) G. Van Groningen, *First Century Gnosticism*, (Leiden 1967) p. 18.

¹⁴¹) See the discussions above: for Jonas, pp. 119-120 and for Bultmann, pp. 116-119.

¹⁴²) See above p. 102 and n. 38.

¹⁴³) Th. P. van Baaren, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

four extant copies of the *Apocryphon of John* have allowed us to observe and enumerate the deviations both in descriptions and motif between the four versions of the *Apocryphon of John* itself and Irenaeus' account in *Adversus Haereses* ¹⁴⁴). The fact is that since we have so many varied Gnostic systems and schools of thought there will always be exceptions or supplemental appendages no matter how desperately we try to hunt for common denominators between systems, or throughout the literary sources of that epoch, regardless of the fact that similar motifs appears in so many distinct systems. Our only other alternative is to accept Jonas' phenomenological conclusion that the crudity of the myths and their inconsistency are really examples of the new epoch of *Dasein* in the dialectical movement of the history of *Geist*, and therefore expected.

A corollary to the above is that "the very structure of language itself seems to impede our understanding" ¹⁴⁵). Professor Wilson has commented that

... the problem of determining to what extent the same words, the same concepts, even the same statements preserve their meaning in continuity right through the history of a tradition, and to what extent they may be modified and reinterpreted in course of time... is the more difficult when it is a case not merely of one linguistic tradition, but several ¹⁴⁶).

It would seem much more helpful if, rather than attempt to explain away these inconsistencies, we accept them as relevant and examine them within their own historical contexts. To explain away apparent contradictions between various motifs — for example, within the four versions of the *Apocryphon of John*, or between such distinct systems with one, two or three principles ¹⁴⁷) — is to deny the fact that there are legitimate differences. We should seek these differences and pose questions of why they should occur not only from the perspectives of the 'motif methodologist' or the sociologist, but from the perspective of the Gnostic.

¹⁴⁴) W. Foerster, *Gnosis*, English translation edited by R. McL. Wilson, Vol. I, (Oxford 1972) pp. 100-120.

¹⁴⁵) E. Benz, "On Understanding Non-Christian Religions" in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, (eds.) J. Kitagawa and M. Eliade, (Chicago 1959) p. 117.

¹⁴⁶) R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁷) W. Foerster, *op. cit.*, in his introductory discussion describes these distinct systems in detail, pp. 9-19.

Fifth, a 'Phenomenological' method which aids us in finding the 'essence' of religious phenomena but is independent of time and space and of attachments to a given cultural environment must be approached with a high degree of caution. Without history where is man? Can we accept the hypothesis that "il a existé une humanité archétypique antérieure à un homme historique"? ¹⁴⁸). Can Phenomenology ignore history and at the same time make inquiries into so-called 'essences'? Can semantic structures be 'transcendental'? Is Eliade's *a priori* assumption that religious symbols express a 'transcendental' meaning acceptable and does our acceptance then grant him a license to hypothesize that "one is justified in supposing that this meaning might have been already grasped dimly in an earlier epoch"? ¹⁴⁹). Can everyone *verstehen*, have empathy or as Jonas writes "a musical ear" to hear the sounds of a Gnostic genus? ¹⁵⁰).

M. Eliade's assumption, which is representative of the 'phenomenological' position, that "spiritual creation is irreducible to a pre-existent system of human values" ¹⁵¹) is comparable to saying that spiritual 'essences' are normative, history is subordinate and that causation is non-existent. In addition, J. Waardenburg has commented that the 'Phenomenological' method of the *epoché* can be understood for many "as an indirect introduction to theology; [that] Phenomenology of Religion in actual fact functioned as *ancilla Theologiae*" ¹⁵²). In the light of this, Van Baaren's comment that "phenomenology underestimates the extent to which all religious complexes are culturally determined and as such [are] not open to a phenomenological approach" needs to be given greater attention ¹⁵³).

Sixth, questions of chronology need to be raised. Haardt's criticism of the 'History of Motifs' for retracing and backdating motifs to earlier motifs leading to extrapolations from different and often

¹⁴⁸) G. Widengren, "La Méthode Comparative: Entre Philologie et *Phénoménologie*" in *Numen*, Vol. 18 (1971) p. 168, quoting R. Pettazzoni's critique of Phenomenology, *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, Vol. 31, (1960) p. 35.

¹⁴⁹) E. Eliade, "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious symbolism" in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁵⁰) H. Jonas, in *Le Origini*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁵¹) M. Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. 173. This is especially directed to J. P. Sartre who has been the polar model for his concept of religious man.

¹⁵²) J. Waardenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁵³) Th. P. van Baaren, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

chronologically mixed texts equally applies in our opinion to all methods in 'Motif Methodology' ¹⁵⁴). The primary question, of course, is the dating of the literature. The Apocryphal, Psuedepigraphic and Qumran literary discoveries are of utmost importance because of their historical relationship to Gnosticism. But over and above these related primary sources are the original Gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi Library. The present consensus is that the Nag Hammadi Library was the library of a Gnostic group and according to Doresse, "the place of discovery and the age of the manuscripts both lead us to believe that this library was hidden at the latest, about the beginning of the fifth century [A.D.], at the time when the Pachomian monasteries... finally extended their influence over the region" ¹⁵⁵). Recently this approximation has been narrowed further to mid fourth century because of the dating of Codex II to 339 A.D., *terminus a quo* ¹⁵⁶). On the other hand, comparatively speaking, the enigma of dating the Library is easier than the dating of the individual documents and each individual *logion*.

We must also be careful not to impose twentieth century conceptual formulations on the thinking of 1900 years ago. J. Munck has criticized scholars like Bultmann, and more generally those who argue for a pre-Christian Gnosticism, for using twentieth century concepts and assumptions and then discovering these same assumptions and concepts prevalent in antiquity ¹⁵⁷). We would suggest that R. A. Kraft's comments with reference to Cardinal Daniélou's Jewish-Christianity can equally be relevant for those who conduct research in the field of Gnosis and Gnosticism. Rather than think in terms of Daniélou's Jewish-Christians, we recommend substituting the world of the Gnostics when asking the following questions:

Should not the descriptive categories for our study of men and movements

¹⁵⁴) See above pp. 102 and 103.

¹⁵⁵) J. Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, translated by P. Mairé, (London 1960) p. 135. For an alternative explanation of the Library's origin see T. Säve-Söderbergh, "Gnostic and Canonical Gospel Traditions" in *Le Origini*, pp. 552-562, who suggests that the Library could have been created for haeresiological purposes.

¹⁵⁶) *Introduction to the Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, (Leiden 1972) p. 4.

¹⁵⁷) J. Munck, "The New Testament and Gnosticism" in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, (eds.) W. Klassen and G. Snyder, (London 1962) p. 225.

in history derive from the historical situations themselves — from the self consciousness of the participant? How can [twentieth century] abstraction[s] ... help me to understand what was happening among early [Gnostics] ¹⁵⁸).

In order for an analysis to proceed from the second century A.D. to proof for pre-Christian Gnosticism, and simultaneously not become tainted by twentieth century terminology, the following questions need to be asked. 1) Is there a genuine similarity between writer A (pre-second century A.D.) and writer B (second century A. D.)? 2) Could writer B not have found the motif in another writer than A? 3) What is the probability of the similarity being random? 4) Could writer B not have developed the motif independently? We would suggest that it would be more beneficial if we were willing to adapt ourselves to different orientations and abandon our excess baggage when it has become apparent that our analysis had depended upon a series of conjectures. We must consciously and continually ask what the Gnostics meant to convey to their own kind 1900 years ago. Our account of what writer B meant must make use of the range of descriptions which the writer himself could at least in principle have applied to describe what he was saying or doing. We cannot correctly appraise a writer's action by saying that he failed to do or say something according to twentieth century criteria unless it is first clear that he did have, and could have had, the intention of saying or acting in the manner that we have imputed to him ¹⁵⁹). We must also remember that twentieth century thinking is culturally bound and limited by the empirical historical evidence that is available.

Seventh, we agree with Dr. Haardt's criticism of the 'Reductive' approach as being tautological but we would advocate that this criticism by Haardt should equally apply to certain cases of 'Motif Methodology' in general ¹⁶⁰). Again we refer to A. A. Kraft's comments about Daniélou's Jewish-Christianity as relevant for us if we consider the context as Gnostic rather than Jewish-Christian:

Is there any way of breaking through the circularity of arguments whereby

¹⁵⁸) R. A. Kraft, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁹) Arguments from silence are one of the many ways Gnostic scholars utilize Patristic evidence either for or against pre-Christian Gnosticism. For criticisms of the *argumentum e silentio*, see R. McL. Wilson, "From Gnosis to Gnosticism" in *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions*, offerts à Henri-Charles Puech, (Paris 1974) p. 426.

¹⁶⁰) See above, p. 103.

the reconstructed 'theology' [or systems] provides the primary evidence for the existence of [Gnosis or Gnosticism] as an entity, while the supposed evidence of [Gnosis or Gnosticism] as an entity is the rationale for reconstructing [Gnostic] 'theology' [or systems] ¹⁶¹).

Finally, we would argue that any commitment to the hermeneutical principle of unifying contemporary phenomena under a common principle of interpretation such as those of Bultmann and Jonas excludes the opportunity of pluralistic methods or pluralistic perspectives.

The above shortcomings of 'Motif Methodology' illustrate that it is not the existence of motifs in the study of Gnostic literature that is in question, but the conceptual propriety of treating such a method as self-sufficient. More generally, we are questioning the underlying assumption of this whole methodological approach of focusing on the texts themselves without due attention to the contexts of other social phenomena which impinge on, and help to explain them.

The study of an idea, a theme, a concept, a motif, from one century to another inevitably leads to problems. Besides the obvious danger of engendering empirically false claims resulting in spurious conclusions, there is the peril of exposure to what Lovejoy has called the 'great chain of being' ¹⁶²). It may be just as valid to speak of an age of submission (political, rather than faith) or an age of confidence (trust in oneself) as to speak of an age of 'eschatological-apocalypticism' (Grant). Even if we restrict the study of a motif to a given historical period in order that we can 'possibly' rule out changed connotation, there still remains underlying conceptual confusion in attempting to focus on a single motif or a collection of motifs as an appropriate unit of historical investigation. In addition, placing emphasis on only philological concerns is narrow and creates obvious limitations. The words denoting the motif may vary dramatically and with incompatible intentions. And the study of motifs based on syntax frequently fails to distinguish between the occurrence of the words which denote the given idea and the use of the relevant sentence by a particular agent on a particular occasion with a particular intention to make a particular assertion. Both James Barr ¹⁶³) and C. H. Dodd ¹⁶⁴) have demonstrated that there is a great deal of complexity in understanding a word

161) R. A. Kraft, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

162) A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, (New York 1960).

163) J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, (Oxford 1961).

164) C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, (London 1935).

or motif of 1900 years ago and that precedents are more fiction than fact in Gnostic antiquity. Furthermore, concentration on motifs is almost by definition atomistic, presenting concepts isolated from the total schemes in which alone they have meaning. Given all the above it appears, in our opinion, that we have only a variety of statements made with words by a variety of different writers with a variety of intentions and as such, *there is no history of an idea to be written, but only a history of various people who used the idea and of their varying social situations* ¹⁶⁵). The question that needs to be posed if a sociological perspective is to be inaugurated is to which particular audience and in which particular socio-economic period did the Gnostic author wish to address himself ¹⁶⁶).

Edwin Yamauchi has also presented criticisms of methodology in his book *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* ¹⁶⁷). These criticisms are not critical of 'Motif Methodology' in the above sense of our discussion, but rather are comments on methodological fallacies that have been involved in the advocacy of the thesis of pre-Christian Gnosticism. Yamauchi distinguishes five such faults: the use of late sources; the assumption that Gnosticism was an unified phenomenon through the centuries whose influence can be detected by its Gnostic motifs; the use of the New Testament itself as evidence; the use of 'parallels and dependencies', such as those cited from Mandaean texts; and the appeal to authority, that is, the uncritical acceptance of statements by previous scholars who have written about Gnosticism. Yamauchi's primary concern in discussing these criticisms of methodology is to

¹⁶⁵) This final conclusion should in no way be interpreted as a reproach of those who apply 'Motif Methodology'. It is only couched in this manner to bring to light the need to balance the scales. The history of an idea or a motif is both necessary and appreciated in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism. We are only suggesting that studies of motifs should not exclude other methodologies and hope that this brief critique will encourage others to follow suit.

¹⁶⁶) For an example of the dangers of not asking this question see Dr. R. M. Grant's comment on the Valentinian exegesis of the New Testament in *The Gospel of Philip* with reference to paragraph 125. According to Grant, this passage "is significant for the study of exegesis in general, for it shows the dangers of allegorization without the controls provided either by common sense or some dogmatic system with roots on earth" (p. 8). Grant can be criticized for applying New Testament standards of allegorization and Christian precedent to a text that was written for a different audience. See *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 79 (1960).

¹⁶⁷) E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-186.

place doubt on a pre-Christian Gnosticism as represented by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.

We have attempted in this section to outline some of the general shortcomings of 'Motif Methodology'. The result has led us to question the conceptual propriety of treating such a method as self-sufficient. 'Motif Methodology', it would appear in our opinion, can only be one methodology among many in the study of Gnosis and Gnosticism. Given that every religious experience is expressed and transmitted in a particular historical context, we would advocate that communication be initiated between social scientists and Gnostic scholars ¹⁶⁸). For "communication is not only a matter of 'to' but of 'between' and in this respect understanding involves not only language forms but social structures" ¹⁶⁹).

¹⁶⁸) More generally, the inauguration of such a meeting, jointly sponsored by the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, has taken place recently (1975). The title of the study group's mandate is "The Social World of Early Christianity".

¹⁶⁹) As quoted in A. N. Wilder, "New Testament Hermeneutics To-day" in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, p. 51 from H. Kraemer, *The Communication of Christian Faith*, (Philadelphia 1956).

ANCIENT ISRAELITE PROPHECY AND DISSONANCE THEORY

BY

R. P. CARROLL

Glasgow, Scotland

Among the dialectical structures of ancient Israelite prophecy the tension between the critique of society (threat oracles) and predictions of future wellbeing (salvation oracles) is the most striking. The trenchant criticism of society's corrupt, oppressive practices has become a hallmark of prophecy as has its equally characteristic prophesying of a golden future when Israel would live securely under a Davidic king and Jerusalem would be the focus of religious attention for the nations. In dialectical terms the elements of judgment and promise represent prophecy's No and Yes to Israelite society. Now it is generally acknowledged that the social criticism of the prophets was a perceptive description of Israel's socio-political state and their predictions of doom accurately anticipated the future. But the salvation oracles, their positive hopes for the future, were a complete failure to foresee the longterm prospects with any degree of accuracy. The conventional idiom of these oracular hopes (e.g. Am. 9 : 11-15; Is. 2 : 2-4; 9 : 2-7; 11 : 1-9; Jer. 31 : 31-34) suggests that the prophets had given little thought to the shape of the future other than to believe that there would be a future. By its very nature predicting the future is precarious yet this was considered to be the business of the prophet (cf. Dt. 18 : 22). This failure of prophecy raises questions about the nature of prophecy and the prophet's apperception of his own work in relation to the world at large. In particular this paper is devoted to a consideration of the problem of whether the prophet was aware of his failure and endeavoured to bridge the gap between expectation and reality or simply had a different view of reality which permitted him to avoid confrontations with possible failure.

Before examining the material available for such an approach it is necessary to consider briefly some views of prophecy which would

reduce the above problem to a pseudo-problem. Thus any view of the prophetic books which maintained that only oracles of judgment were authentic in the eighth century prophets would dismiss the presence of salvation oracles in Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah as secondary interpolations.¹⁾ This would effectively rule out the notion of failure in these prophets and only leave the subsequent prophets open to such a criticism. The cultic approach to prophecy which sees the prophet as a cult functionary proclaiming salvation and judgment as part of his ministry of the covenant cult would make salvation and judgment purely formal elements of a sacred liturgy.²⁾ The cultic view of reality may be seen in the royal psalms where the often beleaguered Israelite king is regarded as the scourge of the nations (Pss. 2 : 7-9; 45 : 2-5; cf. 72 : 8-11). Problems too difficult to solve elsewhere found resolution in a cultic context (cf. Ps. 73; Hab. 3). This cultic interpretation of prophetic statements can be linked to a formal linguistic approach to their utterances whereby the fulfilment of any prediction is a matter of language usage.³⁾ Thus a spiritual understanding of what a prophet predicted might constitute its fulfilment. Any of these three approaches would seriously modify the claim that predictions of salvation in the prophets were open to the charge of having failed to be fulfilled. However, apart from the proponents of these views, most scholars tend to reject the cultic interpretation of prophecy and many regard the salvation promises of Is. 9 : 2-7; 11 : 1-9 as not improbably from Isaiah himself.⁴⁾ There can be little doubt that Second Isaiah was a prophet of salvation who fully expected the return from exile to be a triumphalist affair. As such he is a classical example of a prophet seriously compromised by the event as it later materialised. But this view of the prophet as a foreteller of the future is in keeping with the biblical presentation of the prophet. The deuteronomistic history, Joshua — 2 Kings, presents much of its history as the unfolding of the prophetic word, the deuteronomic

1) Cf. G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (London, 1973), pp. 223-291, esp. p. 272.

2) Cf. E. Würthwein, 'Der Ursprung der prophetischen Gerichtsrede', *ZTK* xlix (1952), pp. 1-16; H. G. Reventlow, *Das Amt des Propheten bei Amos* (Göttingen, 1962).

3) Cf. Wittgenstein's remark 'It is in language that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact.' *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, 1972), I. § 445; see also §§ 437-445.

legislation for the prophet concerns itself with the fulfilment of predictions (Dt. 18 : 20), and the clash between the prophets Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 28) is one of conflicting predictions about the future. Thus it is reasonable to pursue this line of enquiry in terms of predictive prophecy and its failures.

Where prophecy failed there must have been a gap between expectations encouraged by the prophets and the reality in which they lived without any evidence of fulfilment. This gap between belief and reality may have affected the prophet and his followers in varying ways, ranging from the ability to ignore it altogether to such loss of confidence as to silence the prophet. The real problem in dealing with this issue in Old Testament prophecy is the paucity of data about the prophet's self-awareness of such crises. In order to maximise the exploration of this subject I wish to have recourse to dissonance theory. The theory of cognitive dissonance was put forward by Leon Festinger in 1957.⁵) It is essentially a psychological description of how people react to problems arising out of clashes between belief and behaviour. In simple behavioural terms dissonance is said to exist where there is a conflict between an attitude, e.g. the belief that certain indulgences are bad for one's health, and a practice, e.g. the persistent performing of such indulgences. Attempts to modify or resolve the dissonance may include refusing to think about the issue, or a denial of the existence of a conflict, or avoiding the company of people who insist on pointing out the discrepancy between belief and behaviour, or even the maintenance of the view that in spite of the harmful effects of such practices the overall gains outweigh any possible damage done to health. The intensity of dissonance resolution will depend entirely upon the degree of conflict existing in a situation and the pressures put on a person to establish an equilibrium between attitude and behaviour. In this way dissonance reduction can be seen as 'the psychological analogue of the physiological mechanisms which maintain homeostasis in the body.'⁶) Perhaps the most important aspect of eliminating dissonance is the role of social support, i.e. the social

4) See O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (London, 1972), pp. 123-130; also G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 169 ff.

5) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, 1957); Festinger was then professor of psychology at Stanford University.

6) M. L. J. Abercrombie, 'Small Groups', *New Horizons in Psychology*, ed. B. M. Foss (London, 1966), p. 386.

group provides the individual with a context of cognitive factors with which he can identify and which can protect him from dissonance producing opinions.⁷⁾

The theory of cognitive dissonance has had an immense impact in the field of social psychology, particularly in relation to post-decision studies.⁸⁾ But it is Festinger's work on groups with specific predictive expectations which is most relevant for biblical studies. In his book *When Prophecy Fails* Festinger and his colleagues studied a group who had received a message from outer space informing them of an imminent flood about to destroy their part of the world.⁹⁾ When the flood failed to materialise on the expected date, instead of the group disintegrating as might be expected, the Seekers, as they were called, went public and even began to seek converts for their beliefs.¹⁰⁾ This reaction illustrates one of the conclusions generated by dissonance theory 'when people are committed to a belief and a course of action, clear disconfirming evidence may simply result in deepened conviction and increased proselyting.'¹¹⁾ However further research has suggested that this principle requires some modification so as to take into account whether the group's environment is hostile or friendly. Thus where there is minimal social support and the group is ridiculed there will be a drive towards proselytising but where there is more social support and the group is not ridiculed by outsiders there may be little need to convert others.¹²⁾ As the function of conversion in dissonance theory is to reduce dissonance by persuading more and more people that the system of belief is correct and thus increase the social support within the group so there is less need for such tactics when the public at large is not overtly hostile.

7) On social support see Festinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-259.

8) See relevant articles in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* vols. 52-60 (1956-60); also any competent introduction to psychology, e.g. M. Manis, *An Introduction to Cognitive Psychology* (California, 1971), pp. 239-53; E. E. Sampson, *Social Psychology and Contemporary Society* (New York, 1971), pp. 108-14.

9) L. Festinger, H. W. Riecken, and S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis, 1956; paperback edition New York, 1964).

10) *Ibid.*, pp. 139-92.

11) *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 28.

12) J. A. Hardyck and M. Braden, 'Prophecy Fails Again: A Report of a Failure to Replicate', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 65 (1962), pp. 136-41.

The opening chapter of *When Prophecy Fails* discusses unfulfilled prophecies and disappointed messiahs and has an obvious bearing on this study of prophecy.¹³⁾ But its main importance is the paradigm of conditions set out for testing Festinger's thesis about increased fervour following disconfirmation of a belief. For this will permit the biblical scholar to check his data to see if this approach can be used in their analysis. Although it is specifically designed to test a particular form of activity response to dissonance it can be used to delineate general reactions to the failure of expectations. The paradigm may be set out briefly as follows:

1. There must be conviction.
2. There must be commitment to this conviction.
3. The conviction must be amenable to unequivocal disconfirmation.
4. Such unequivocal disconfirmation must occur.
5. Social support must be available subsequent to the disconfirmation.¹⁴⁾

Conditions 1 and 2 make the belief resistant to change, 3 and 4 suggest factors that would entail the discarding of the belief, and 5 allows a situation whereby the belief may be maintained or even used to persuade others of its truth. In the subsequent discussion Festinger looks at various millennial or messianic movements such as the second coming of Christ, the Sabbatai Zevi movement in the 17th century, and the Millerites in the 19th century. The main difficulty for his thesis is finding sufficient data to confirm or refute it. The ambiguity of the evidence also militates against a cogent exposition of the theory when applied to complex traditions such as the second coming of Christ.¹⁵⁾

In applying dissonance theory to the prophetic traditions of the Old Testament it is necessary to restate the theory in such a way that it can be usefully applied to material outside the normal range of social psychology. The general theory of cognitive dissonance describes at least three responses to dissonance which can be readily adapted for biblical research purposes. These consist of avoidance of

13) *When Prophecy Fails*, pp. 3-32.

14) *Ibid.*, p. 216; a longer exposition of the paradigm is given on pp. 4-6.

15) This is acknowledged by Festinger *ibid.*, pp. 23-5.

16) See especially *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, pp. 177-202.

sources likely to increase dissonance, i.e. a tendency to associate with those who hold the same opinion, or the production of rationalisations and explanations which show how the dissonance can be reduced by new evidence, or by gaining converts to the movement whose conversion will constitute new elements of cognition consonant with the belief system.¹⁶) Thus social support is of paramount importance in providing the individual with a secure context from which he may avoid or modify all dissonant elements. To translate these responses into suitable categories for application to prophetic movements of the biblical period I would suggest the traditional notions of exclusivity of grouping, hermeneutical systems, and various forms of missionary activity. The tendency towards exclusiveness is apparent in certain periods of ancient Israelite society. The histories of Judaism and Christianity are filled with complex hermeneutical systems explaining doctrines and dogmas in such a way as to avoid charges of inconsistent or contradictory notions. Missionary movements have been a strong feature of Christian activity over the centuries. However these elements are not in themselves responses to dissonance. But given a context of prophetic prediction their presence might indicate an area of response to the experience of dissonance among members of the group. Thus the theory may provide the researcher with another analytical probe for his material.

The paradigm set out for describing a suitable testing of the dissonance theory raises one major problem for prophecy and that is the difficulty of clearly establishing evidence for conditions 3 and 4. There are many examples of predictions in the Old Testament which have been fulfilled, e.g. Jeremiah's predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem, and predictions which have not been fulfilled, e.g. Israel's sharing power with Egypt and Assyria (Is. 19 : 24) or the hopes expressed in Is. 9 : 2-7; 11 : 1-9. But there is little evidence of a conscious awareness on the prophet's part that his predictions have failed to materialise. Condition 4 states 'such undeniable disconfirmatory evidence must occur and must be recognised by the individual holding the belief.'¹⁷) This lack of awareness poses the question whether the prophet seriously expected these predictions of future bliss to be actually fulfilled and if so did he expect such fulfilment in

17) *When Prophecy Fails*, p. 4.

his own lifetime? It certainly seems to be the case that the prophets hardly ever anticipated the distant future (cf. Dt. 18 : 20).¹⁸⁾ For them the immediate future was the stage on which would be played out the consequences of Israel's response to the prophetic message. The one clear example available of a prophet confronted by a positive response to his preaching and therefore a rescinding of the threat of doom is Jonah. And that presents a picture of a prophet shocked and disappointed by the success of his mission! It may be that the prophets were simply unaware or incapable of conceiving of the possibility of failure, in which case it becomes difficult to apply rigorously the conditions of Festinger's thesis. But it is the structure of the prophetic proclamation that poses the main obstacle to the discovering of dissonant elements in the prophetic traditions.

The basic structure of Israelite prophecy is the proclamation of a message designed to create a response in the people to whom it is addressed and thereby to influence their behaviour. Within the critique of society there is the call to return or repent, that is, a call to make a decision and change direction. This principle of repentance makes the people a moral agent capable of responding to the prophetic word. As such it means that prophecy cannot be simply thought of as a predicting the future irrespective of man's action in the present time. Although the literature influenced by deuteronomic ideas (e.g. Dt. 18 : 22; Jer. 28) gives the impression of the prophet as a predictor of future events this is an inadequate summary of his role in Israelite society. The kernel of the prophetic summons to transformation in society may be summed up in the words of Isaiah 'cease to do evil, learn to do good' (1 : 16, 17). It is, of course, necessary to add a rider to the principle of repentance by pointing out that an oversimplified notion of repentance is ruled out in certain instances, e.g. Isaiah's preaching is designed to prevent the people turning and being healed (6 : 10), and Jeremiah recognises that public repentance can be a false form of repentance (3 : 10). At the other end of the scale there is the example of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites which resulted in national fasting and repentance and averted the threatened doom (3 : 4-10).

This principle of repentance and its effect on the prophetic proclamation is enunciated most clearly in Jer. 18 : 7-10:

¹⁸⁾ Fohrer, *op. cit.*, pp. 272 f.

'If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent of the good which I had intended to do to it.'

The element of response here controls the future so that whatever a prophet might declare about a nation's prospects was subject to that nation's response. So Festinger's simple paradigm of a prediction-fulfilment state of affairs will not cover the prophetic case. Furthermore there is built into this statement about response a fail-safe device for prophetic prediction. No prediction can ever really be falsified because whatever may be predicted of the future it will be subject to human reaction. If the future turns out to be other than expected then the principle expounded in Jer. 18 : 7-10 can be utilised to show how the prediction was controlled by men's actions. There is even some evidence within the Old Testament traditions that this possibility was realised on occasion. The oracles of Jerusalem's destruction given in Mic. 1-3 are shown to have been neutralised by Hezekiah's repentance (Jer. 26 : 18, 19). A similar application of the repentance principle may also have operated in the Chronicler's account of the reign of king Manasseh (2 Chron. 33 : 10-20; cf. the account in 2 Kings 21 : 1-18 which has no mention of Manasseh's prayer). It is also possible to see the false repentance of Jer. 3 : 10 as the reverse side of this application, namely, repentance may only be a show of repentance so if disaster follows national repentance the rule remains valid.

The prophetic call to decision which can evoke man's response and bring about what Buber calls 'the extreme act: the turning to God' ¹⁹) stresses the activity of man but must not be taken to mean that God is subject to man's response in such a way that the notion of transcendence is lost. For another strand in the prophetic proclamation is the declaration of redemption, especially in Second Isaiah. Both repentance and redemption are aspects of the transformation of man, one from the human side and the other from the divine side. ²⁰) Thus the vision of salvation in Is. 9 : 2-7 is anchored in the assertion 'the zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this' as if to suggest that the future is not

19) *The Prophetic Faith* (New York, 1949, 1960), p. 104.

20) Cf. Fohrer, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

entirely dependent upon man's response. The reverse of this positive aspect of transcendence is Is. 6 : 10 where the proclamation subverts man's response in order to prevent his turning away from disaster. These signs of transcendence may well modify the principle laid down in Jer. 18 : 7-10 and permit at some level the introduction of dissonance theory. But it must be recognised that the principles of transcendence and repentance severely qualify any application of this theory to prophetic traditions.

If the notion of repentance removes the bulk of Old Testament predictions from the possibility of falsification, particularly the salvation oracles, then the remnant motif may well protect the positive element in prophecy from total disintegration. There is, however, no agreement among scholars on the precise nature of the remnant. It is clear that in Am. 5 : 3 (cf. 3 : 12) it simply indicates the scale of the destruction and in Is. 1 : 8, 9 it points to bare survival. But it came to mean the nucleus of the future for later writers (e.g. Is. 11 : 11, 16; Hag. 2 : 2; Zec 8 : 6).²¹) So it became a device for retrieving the oracles of salvation from obscurity and a vehicle for new oracles of salvation. It also functioned as a hermeneutical principle in later interpretations of the prophets for a more positive evaluation of the salvation element in the canonical prophets.²²)

In practical terms the concepts of repentance and remnant expose the inadequacy of dissonance theory for dealing with the complex notions involved in prophecy. No prediction need ever fail because the repentance principle creates sufficient space for it to be modified in accordance with human behaviour. The prophetic view of human society tends to be pessimistic and critical so the proclamation of doom is dominant but because of the possibility that men will respond there is always the hope of restoration or salvation. The historical experiences of Israel and Judah reflect the disintegration of small states during the rise of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires and this fitted in with the prophetic critique of society. But after the Babylonian exile the Jerusalem community was reconstructed along different lines and the remnant motif provided a useful approach to reinterpreting the old salvation oracles of the prophets. Thus even the salvation

21) Fohrer, *ibid.*, p. 271.

22) Cf. G. F. Hasel, *The Remnant* (Berrien Springs, 1972).

oracles were not seen as failures but as new possibilities for the ongoing community. So these two levels of prediction expectation safely guard prophecy from a simplistic approach to failure response. Festinger's theory is fine for post-decision problems in modern society and for dealing with simple communities whose existence is grounded in predictions of a straightforward nature.

But dissonance theory can provide some positive insights into the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament. It can make the researcher aware of the problems facing any prophet in a given situation in which expectation of a particular nature comes under pressure from events outside the prophet. Where expectation can be falsified and where the prophet is embarrassed by his situation then it is reasonable to assume some experience of dissonance has disturbed the prophet. But the editing of the prophetic tradition has removed so many oracles from their social setting that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct any possible interaction between prophet and environment.

The prophetic tradition which yields the most positive material for this study is that associated with Isaiah of Jerusalem. The totality of judgment expressed in Is. 6 : 9-13 is in striking contrast to the salvation oracles elsewhere attributed to Isaiah and also to the call to turn from evil in 1 : 16, 17. The material in 6 : 9-13 looks like mature reflection on the nature of his call in the light of his subsequent experiences of an unresponsive people. This section should probably be treated as coming from a time after his failure to persuade Ahaz the king to trust Yahweh rather than the Assyrians (7 : 1-17).²³ Thus dissonance caused by the failure of his proclamation is resolved, or modified, by the hermeneutics of his commission which demonstrate that such a failure was his mission! This general failure of preaching eventually led Isaiah to retire from active proclamation and to seal up his teaching among his disciples (8 : 16-18). Here is a good example of a withdrawal from the source of dissonance and of recourse to social support among a group of sympathetic followers whose agreement with the prophet could stimulate him and detract from his failure. The response of his followers could provide him with a more positive

²³ See H. W. Hoffmann, *Die Intention der Verkündigung Jesajas*, BZAW 136 (Berlin, 1974), pp. 77-80; cf. Kaiser, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

ministry without the intrusion of harsh dissonant elements. The tendency of prophets to congregate in groups must have facilitated the avoidance of critical elements in the general public. It is clear from Jeremiah's experience that the prophet was a particularly vulnerable target to gibes such as 'where is the word of Yahweh? Let it come!' (Jer. 17 : 15; cf. Is. 53 : 1).

The complex traditions surrounding the Assyrian crisis in the time of Isaiah make it very difficult to sort out both Isaiah's view of the situation and the precise nature of the event described in the legendary accounts in 2 Kings 19. How the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. and its stringent consequences described in Is. 1 : 4-9 are to be reconciled with the triumphalist deliverance recorded in the Kings story is beyond the scope of this paper and the wit of most competent scholars. But Childs, whose study of this problem is a fine piece of form-critical work, is certainly correct in his assessment 'the oracles of Isaiah are far too complex and diversified to allow for a simple formulation of his position on Assyria which could then serve as a criterion for measuring the historical elements in the narrative material.'²⁴) Furthermore it is not clear at all whether Isaiah held out hope for Jerusalem irrespective of whatever its people did or whether Is. 37 : 33-35 is a genuine Isaiah saying.²⁵) If it could be established that Isaiah did believe Jerusalem was inviolable and that Yahweh would defend it against the Assyrians then it would be possible to regard 2 Kings 19 as an outworking of that belief. In which case in the light of Is. 1 : 4-9 and the terrible deprivations of the siege it is possible to regard the legend in 2 Kings 19 as a resolution of the dissonance caused by the failure of Isaiah's hopes for his city put forward by the theologian historians who believed history to be the outworking of prophecy. However the evidence is far too meagre to maintain such a view with any degree of confidence. At the most it is a possibility, but one which reflects all the uncertainty and obscurity of the prophetic tradition at its most difficult level. In the final analysis it is not the prophet's experience of dissonance but the later community's experience which involves the prophet in the situation.

²⁴) *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (London, 1967), p. 120.

²⁵) Cf. T. C. Vriezen, 'Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah', *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (London, 1962), pp. 139-42; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39* (London, 1974), pp. 367-412, esp. pp. 384 f., 394 f.

Outside of the Isaiah tradition traces of dissonance reaction can be seen in the confessions of Jeremiah where the prophet considers the possibility of having been deceived by the deity (15 : 15-18) and in his general adamancy against the people and the other prophets (1 : 18; 15 : 20; 23 : 9-40). Throughout the oracles of Jeremiah there is a feeling of confusion and anxiety which suggests the prophet was struggling with inner conflicts in an attempt to resolve the problems of his role in Judean society. Further elements of dissonance can be found in the prophecies of the post-exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah concerning the community governor Zerubbabel (Hag. 2 : 20-23; Zec. 4 : 6-10; 6 : 9-14). Here the expectations centring on Zerubbabel are in contrast with the reality of Zerubbabel's failure to realise the high hopes predicted of him. Yet the only trace of that reality would appear to be in Zec. 6 : 11 where 'crowns' may originally have been made for both Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, or what is more likely, for Zerubbabel alone. Because the expectations for Zerubbabel were never realised the high priest has been substituted for the governor in the text.²⁶) Again this is only a possibility and one without further support in the text. Perhaps the case of Zerubbabel is a good example of a problem posed for later readers of the text rather than for the community which produced the tradition. But, at least, it is an indication that dissonance producing events could be dealt with by editing the text at some level so as to reflect historical outcome.

These examples drawn from Isaiah, Jeremiah and the post-exilic prophets show that there is some evidence of factors giving rise to dissonance within the prophetic experience and reflected in the written traditions. The coenobia of the earlier prophets and the disciples of the canonical prophets provided the prophetic movement with adequate social support to shield them from the onslaughts of their critics and the worst ravages of dissonant experiences. The failure of so many salvation oracles and the modifications brought about by time and reality may have helped shape Second Isaiah's vision of Israel as a servant suffering on behalf of others (Is. 53) but even that vision terminated in a hint of triumphalism (v. 12). The hermeneutic

26) M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (London, 1960), p. 312; cf. J. L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1974), p. 288; P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London, 1968), pp. 196 f.

process of rationalisation and explanation is difficult to trace within the biblical tradition, though in the later prophets there are echoes of the earlier prophets (e.g. Hab. 1:5; Zec. 7:7; cf. Dan. 9:2, 24-27).²⁷) But in post-biblical times systems of hermeneutical activity emerge which subjected the biblical text to minute examination. Thus there is the handling of the prophetic text at Qumran where the community tried to read itself in the predictions of the prophets. The New Testament is the beginning of multiple forms of exegesis on the Old Testament in which the writers expound their belief that the Christ event is the fulfilment of prophecy, and that many of the events of that period can be expressly described as 'this is what was spoken by the prophet...' (e.g. Acts 2:16). Rabbinical Judaism continued to produce exegeses of the biblical text and some of the rabbis sought in their own time the fulfilment of prophecy. Early Christian patristic interpretation followed a messianic understanding of the prophets in which all the expectations of the prophetic tradition were related to Christ and the experiences of the Christian community. Thus the failure of prophecy in its own time became the opportunity for later communities to seek in their time the unfolding of prophetic expectation.

The fundamental principle which seems to emerge from all this exegetical activity surrounding the prophetic texts is dissonance gives rise to hermeneutic. In order to avoid the failure of prophecy or because there is a strong belief that prophecy cannot fail it becomes necessary to construct a system of explanation showing how various examples of supposedly failed predictions can be rescued by reinterpretation and reapplication. Here is the main thrust of dissonance theory for biblical studies — it allows hermeneutical systems to be seen as responses to failures in prediction. It therefore theoretically poses the assertion that where there are prophetic texts there must also be, what Barr calls, a 'resultant system', i.e., 'there are two systems or levels at work: the first is the text, the second is the system into which the interpretation runs out.'²⁸) The resultant system may be any form of hermeneutical principle used by later interpreters, e.g. mystical approaches to the text or allegorical systems or typological

27) Cf. F. F. Bruce, 'The earliest Old Testament interpretation', *The Witness of Tradition*, OTS xvii (Leiden, 1972), pp. 37-52.

28) J. Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (London, 1965), pp. 108 f.

exegesis in Jewish and Christian theology. Perhaps the earliest attempts at reinterpreting and therefore transforming the prophetic traditions came from the apocalyptic writers who attempted to get around the basic failure of the prophetic expectation of future salvation by grounding such hopes in a transcendental act of God imposed upon mankind (cf. Dan. 2 : 44, 45; 7 : 9-27).²⁹) The fusion of prophecy and apocalyptic eventually led to the emergence of Christianity which introduced yet another set of dissonance producing expectations.

If the structure for analysis is accepted as the text plus its interpretation within various communities embracing it as holy scripture or authoritative writ then it becomes possible for dissonance theory to be applied with fruitful results. However this means the material available for research is increased to include the fields of biblical exegesis and its history, historical theology and the multiple forms of sects deriving their existence from discrete interpretations of the Bible. It becomes a programme for historical, sociological and intellectual research and threatens to get out of hand. The difficulties of establishing the precise meaning of so much biblical material remain and therefore the legitimacy of many of the interpretations maintained in any such study is also called in question. An example of the difficulty of clearly establishing what is the nature of the case may be taken from the New Testament. On the surface it would appear that an ideal subject for dissonance analysis would be the notion of *Parousieverzögerung* 'delay of the parousia'. The New Testament certainly seems to present a community daily expecting the return of Jesus (cf. Mt. 24 : 34; Acts 1 : 11; 1 Cor. 7 : 26, 29-31; 1 Thess. 4 : 15-17; 2 Thess. 1 : 10; Rev. 22 : 20). The return of Jesus is an event that appears to be easily verifiable or falsifiable. History has shown that the expected return did not materialise so there should be fairly straightforward evidence of attempts to resolve the ensuing dissonance caused by this failure. At one level this seems to be the case in that there are assertions in the New Testament which suggest that an interim period must occur before the parousia takes place, e.g. 'this gospel of the kingdom must be preached throughout the whole world . . .

29) See P. D. Hanson, 'Jewish Apocalyptic against its Near Eastern Environment', *Revue Biblique* 78 (1971), pp. 32-58; 'Old Testament Apocalyptic Re-examined', *Interpretation* 25 (1971), pp. 454-79; and more recently his *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1975).

and then the end will come.' (Mt. 24 : 14) or 'that day will not come unless . . .' (2 Thess. 2 : 3). Thus explanations are arising which attempt to modify the expectation in the light of reality and show how the coming may still be expected but not before a period of time has elapsed in which must occur certain other events. On the other hand the Fourth Gospel gives the impression that there will be no second coming in the future because the parousia has already taken place.³⁰⁾ The real problem for the researcher is to discover which view represents the authentic Christian belief and to what extent there was any one fixed view about the future. Some of the early churches may have had a strong belief in an imminent parousia but others probably identified that coming with the outpoured spirit at Pentecost or by regarding the church as the body of Christ had no concept of an absent Christ requiring a return to earth. Thus it becomes very difficult to establish clearly dissonance response because of the lack of strict controls on the material.

Furthermore the early Christian communities were not simply eschatologically orientated groups so expectations of future events were open to failure without catastrophic effects for the communities. Fundamental to these communities was the emergence and development of christology which became the formative element in subsequent Christianity.³¹⁾ It is the christological *kerygma* which functions as the resultant system in the New Testament.³²⁾ Christology allied to notions of transcendence prevented Christianity becoming the slave of eschatological expectations and allowed it to develop into a complex system of transformational beliefs. Where there are dissonance producing events in the New Testament christology resolves them by hermeneutical processes. If there is cognitive dissonance in the New Testament it is created by the death of Jesus and resolved by the christology of the gospels.³³⁾ The dissonance expressed by Lk. 24 : 21 acquired its resolution by way of a christological interpretation of the Old Testament (vv. 25-27). It cannot be denied that communities continued to

30) Cf. N. Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York, 1974), p. 41; see also A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden, 1966).

31) See D. Flusser, 'Salvation Present and Future', *Numen* 16 (1969), pp. 139-55.

32) Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

33) See U. Wernik, 'Frustrated beliefs and early Christianity', *Numen* 22 (1975), pp. 96-130.

expect some form of literal return of Jesus, e.g. the churches of Paul and the churches addressed by the Apocalypse, but slowly the christological hermeneutic won its way until by the time of Augustine christology had overcome chiliasm. Yet the subsequent history of Christianity in Western Europe has been punctuated by chiliastic movements, strong in millennial expectations but rather weak in christology.³⁴⁾

Because Judaism and Christianity had strong elements of eschatological expectation within them there was always a tendency for dissonance resolving hermeneutics to emerge, but because neither structure was simply constructed around such expectations their central cores were relatively safe from the vicissitudes of failed predictions. Perhaps because Christianity has a stronger eschatological element at its roots it has been more vulnerable to millennial movements seizing it and distorting its christology. Judaism is centred around Torah and sees its existence as the way of obedience to divine commandment with the stress on the ethical mode of life. As such even prophecy was subservient to Torah and was seen as commentary on Torah. So the failure of prophecy was not a danger to Judaism, though the existence of prophetic expectation did give scope to movements within Judaism to develop messianic movements which occasionally broke away from the parent body, e.g. Qumran, Christianity, and the later stages of the Sabbatai Zevi movement.

This study has been a theoretical exploration of the possibilities of applying the theory of cognitive dissonance to the study of biblical prophecy. If it has failed to reveal startling results that is because the material to hand is strictly limited in terms of information about prophetic self-awareness and details about how the prophetic preaching was received by the people.³⁵⁾ The fundamental element of repentance in the prophetic declaration also rendered clear failures of prediction rather difficult to establish.³⁶⁾ Festinger's theory has great explana-

34) Flusser notes 'where Christology is strong, the longing for Millennium is comparatively weak', *op. cit.*, p. 155; on later movements see N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1970).

35) Some useful material is contained in H. W. Wolff, 'Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch'. *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (München, 1964), pp. 30-129.

36) On repentance see T. M. Raitt, 'The Prophetic Summons to Repentance', *ZAW* 83 (1971), pp. 30-49.

tory value when applied to groups constructed around simple prediction expectations characteristic of the twentieth century but it is out of its depth when applied to complex structures of belief and hermeneutic such as Judaism and Christianity. This is not to conclude that the theory has no applicatory value to the study of prophecy but to be wary of any simplistic application of a cross-disciplinary approach. It can uncover various levels of tension within the prophetic traditions and it illustrates the complexity of the interaction between prophet and society. According to some authorities 'the main virtue of dissonance theory is that its use permits so much understanding. It points to many nonobvious sources of tension.'³⁷) As such the theory should assist in mining the multiplex nature of the Old Testament prophetic tradition given further research into specific sets of texts.

³⁷) J. W. Brehm and A. R. Cohen, *Explorations in Cognitive Dissonance* (London, 1962), p. 314.

THE EXISTENTIAL, SOCIAL, AND COSMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UPANAYANA RITE

BY

CARL OLSON

Madison, New Jersey, U.S.A.

For the Hindu as depicted in the *Gṛhyasūtras*, life moves along in a succession of periods. For each of these periods there are proper rites to perform. The most critical periods of life are birth, puberty, marriage, and death. These crucial times in the life of religious man are periods of transition. They are times of great danger. In order for man to pass over the danger, he must occasionally take a leap. The anthropologist — Mary Douglas — cogently expresses the situation, as she writes:

Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others. The danger is controlled by ritual which precisely separates him from his old status, segregates him for a time and then publicly declares his entry to his new status ¹).

Thus the succesful leap entails a transition into a new realm of reality. For the Hindu the transition of various danger periods is accomplished by means of numerous *Saṃskāras* (sacraments). Traditionally one of the most important *Saṃskāras* has been the *Upanayana* (initiation) ceremony.

This paper will not be primarily concerned with the general structure of the rite. This investigation will focus on those aspects of the *Upanayana* rite which will enable us to view the existential, social, and cosmic significance of this rite for the Hindus. Thus this paper will attempt to show the significance of the *Upanayana* rite in terms of three levels of being.

1) Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1966), p. 96.

I

In speaking of initiation in general terms, one finds that it denotes a body of rites and oral teachings. It is the purpose of these rites and teachings to produce a radical modification in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated²⁾. In more precise philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition. In other words, the initiate emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation³⁾. Thus there is a change in status from one ontological level of existence to another.

In the *Upanayana* ceremony, there are some examples of this change in ontological status of the initiate. There are, for example, several preparations before the actual ceremony. The day before the ceremony the auspicious god Ganesa and several other deities were propitiated. On the night before the ceremony, the body of the candidate was smeared with a yellow substance. A silver ring was tucked into the top-knot of his hair. The child was also instructed to remain silent during the night⁴⁾. The yellow substance on the child's body may have symbolized his embryonic state, as did the command to absolute silence. For example, what is silent is undetermined (S.B.VII.2.2.14). The Hindus also believe that every man is born a Sūdra⁵⁾. The color yellow is the color of the southern direction. The southern direction is symbolic of the Sūdra caste⁶⁾. The south is also the direction of Yama who is the lord of the dead. Furthermore, yellow is one the colors symbolic of demons⁷⁾ who are residents of Yama's realm.

He views transition as a process and in the case of *rites de passage* a transformation. In the transitional or liminal period, the individual is structurally invisible. This structural invisibility has a twofold char-

2) Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 112.

3) Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (trans.) Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), p. x.

4) Raj Bali Pandey, *Hindu Samskaras* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), p. 128.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 30.

6) Willibald Kirfel, *Symbolik des Hinduismus und des Jinismus* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1959), pp. 100-101.

7) Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* Vol. I (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), p. 237.

acter. Turner writes concerning the initiates, "They are at once no longer classified and not yet classified" 8). In other words, neophytes are similar to embryos or newborn infants. "Their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories" 9). A common characteristic of transitional beings is that they have nothing. They possess no status, property, rank or kinship position. This process of which Turner writes seems to be also evident in the *Upanayana* rite.

It may be possible to elucidate this argument by considering the position of Victor Turner.

Another preparatory practice is the final meal the initiate has with his mother (G.G.S.II.10.7). This last meal seems to symbolize the cutting of the umbilical cord. This observation makes sense, if one recalls that the yellow substance smeared on the boy's body and the command to keep silent represent an embryonic state. Thus the last meal with his mother represents the final nourishment that he is to receive from his mother before he is born. These actions appear to represent a re-enactment of the child's natural birth. The rite, by the symbolic returning of the child to an embryonic state, is communicating that this is the true or spiritual birth of the child. In the Vedic period the initiation was regarded as a second birth (A.V. II.5.3). The rebirth is expressed in terms of a teacher changing the boy into an embryo and keeping him in his belly for three nights. This entire scenario represents a rite of passage in the sense of a rite of separation to use van Gennap's terminology 10). This passage is from the child's natural profane condition to the threshold of the sacred.

To cite another example, after one year, three nights or immediately, the teacher recites the *Sāvitrī Mantra* to the student. The two participants sit north of the fire. The teacher sits with his face turned eastward and the student faces westward (P.G.S. II.3.3). The teacher recites the *Sāvitrī Mantra* (R.V. III.62.10) in *Gāyatrī* verse to the Brahman student. The teacher, however, recites a *Trishtubh* verse to a Kshatriya and a *Gayatī* to a Vaisya (Ś.G.S. II.5.4-6). The teaching

8) Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 96.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 97.

10) Arnold van Gennap, *The Rites of Passage* (trans.) Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 20.

of the sacred mantra signalized the second birth of the child ¹¹). The teacher was regarded as the father and the *Sāvitrī Mantra* was understood as the mother of the initiate (M.S. II.170).

In existential terms the student has emerged from the initiation ceremony endowed with a totally different being. According to the Hindus, every man is born a Sūdra. "By birth every one is a Sūdra, by performing the Upanayana he is called a twice-born, by reading the Vedas he becomes a *Vipra* and by realizing Brahman he attains the status of a Brāhmana" ¹²). To achieve this condition he must be reborn. This rebirth is attained through the initiation rite. In other words, the student has experienced a spiritual transformation. His body has been sanctified. He has been purified from all sin and evil in his present existence and after death (M.S. II.26). The student is now fit for union with Brahman (M.S. II.28).

II

There is also a change in social status for the initiate. As van Gennap has indicated, the initiate is incorporated into a new social reality ¹³). He has passed from his former profane state of ignorance, inequality and irresponsibility into a sacred social position of enlightenment, equality and responsibility. In other words, the Hindu initiate is taken from the caste structure. It is the secrets and ways of this society that the transformed initiate learns. And it is eventually into this social realm that the newly initiated individual is incorporated.

The caste structure is emphasized throughout the *Upanayana* rite. For example, a Brahman student was initiated in the eighth year after conception and had until sixteen years of age to be initiated. The ages for a Kshatriya and Vaisya are eleven to twenty-two and twelve to twenty-four respectively (Ś.G.S. II.1). Oldenberg feels that the numbers were artificially prepared ¹⁴). On the other hand, Gonda sees the numbers as having a mystical significance ¹⁵). Caste distinction

11) Alfred Hillebrant, *Ritual-Litteratur Vedische Opfer und Zauber* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trubner, 1897), pp. 53-54.

12) Quoted from Pandey, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

13) van Gennap, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

14) Hermann Oldenberg, *Die Religion Des Veda* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta' Sche, 1923), p. 464.

15) Jan Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens I: Veda und älterer Hinduismus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960), p. 119.

is also evident in the giving of the *kaupīna* which is a small piece of cloth used to cover the private parts of an individual. The Brahman student was given an antelope skin (*ajina*), the Kshatriya was offered the skin of a spotted deer and the Vasiya was presented a cowhide or goat's skin (Ś.G.S. II.13.2.4.5; G.S.G. II.10.9). The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* states that the antelope skin is symbolic of spiritual and intellectual pre-eminence (G.Br. 1-2. 1-8). This assertion parallels the accepted superiority of the Brahman caste. There are also differences based on the material used to make the sacred thread (*yajñopavita*). Another distinction arises with the giving of the staff (*daṇḍa*). The Brahman student was given a staff made of *Palāsa* wood; the Kshatriya was given one made of *Bilva* wood; and the Vaisya was offered a staff of *Udumbara* wood (P.G.S. II.5.25-27). There are also differences of length to be observed depending upon the initiates caste. Thus the caste that the individual was eventually to re-enter was continually emphasized throughout the rite.

There are also other examples of social significance in the ceremony. After receiving the staff (*daṇḍa*) from his teacher, the student went to beg for food, which was to be the primary means of subsistence throughout his career. The food obtained by begging was supposed to be pure (M.S. II.189). And the brahmācārī who subsists on food obtained by begging is like one observing a fast (M.S. II.188). The student begged initially from those who would not refuse him on the day of the *Upanayana*. This usually entailed his mother and other relatives. The practice of begging emphasized to the student that he was a non-economic entity. He was thus dependent on public charity¹⁶). When the student became a full member of society he knew that he must perform his social duties. The practice of begging also emphasized the sacred value of food. Of course, food has many social implications for the Hindus.

It has been noted that the *Upanayana* ceremony was not only a passport to the literary tradition of the Hindus. It was also necessary for entrance into Hindu society, because without the completion of the initiation rite one could not marry an Aryan girl and be accepted as a full member of society.

In the transitional period of initiation the young men were released

16) Pandey, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

from the structure of Hindu society to the immediacy of *communitas*. Victor Turner understands *communitas* as that which emerges in the liminal period. It is "society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" ¹⁷). After initiation they return to the given structure revitalized by their experience of *communitas*. As Turner has noted there is a dialectic present without which no society can function ¹⁸).

There were severe social consequences for those who failed to complete the *Upanayana* rite. These individuals were referred to as *vrātyas*. Manu states that because they have failed to go through the *Upanayana*, the *vrātyas* are excluded from the *Sāvitrī Mantra* and become despised by the Aryans. The *vrātyas* are outcasts who are excluded from the Vedic writings and Aryan marriage (M.S. II. 39-40). The *vrātyas* were probably eastern tribes. According to Winternitz ¹⁹), it is not known if they were Aryan but they were outside the pale of Brahmanism. This position is challenged by Heesterman who argues that the *vrātyas* were not outside the brahmanical pale or even non-Aryan ²⁰). Irregardless of these positions, those who dissented from the Vedic religious tradition in later times were debarred from all religious and social activities.

III

The existential and social implications of the *Upanayana* rite have been noted. It is now necessary to view its cosmic significance.

Due to the fact that one of the main purposes of the *Upanayana* was the acquisition of knowledge and the building of character, the best possible teacher was sought. In the *Atharaveda* (XI.5) the term *ācārya* appears. In his instance, it literally means "the man who knows, adheres to and practices the traditional good behaviour, customs, practices,

17) Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p. 96.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 129.

19) M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* Vol. I (trans.) S. Ketkan (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1927), p. 154.

20) J. C. Heesterman, "Vrātya and Sacrifice", *Indo-Iranian Journal* Vol. VI NR I (1962), p. 18.

establishes rules or institutions" ²¹). It must be noted that the religious teacher had a divine character (Ś.B.2.2.2.6). The spiritual guide occupied a very important place in Hindu society (Śv.U.6.23). The significance of the teacher had cosmic implications. Jan Gonda aptly expresses this point:

The potent word, the 'holy power' of which the brahman who has studied the Veda is the bearer must be transmitted and remain a living force in the world; the dharma must be known by those who reach maturity lest society and the universe fall into decay and be reduced to chaos ²²).

Thus only a teacher who was the paragon of wisdom, good character, and purity was thought able to lead and teach a young child. Therefore, the best possible teacher was sought to attain the best possible results.

During the rite, the teacher initiates the student while standing. The teacher ties the girdle (*mekhalā*) around the student three times from left to right (Ś.G.S. II.2.). The girdle possessed a mystical power by means of its ability to bind ²³). The girdle served as an umbilical cord symbolic of a new birth. It also afforded protection from evil powers ²⁴).

After the girdle was tied to the waist of the student, he was invested with the sacred thread. This practice was unknown to early writers. For example, the *Gṛhyasūtras* do not contain any prescription for the wearing of the sacred thread. The sacred thread (*yajñopavita*) could be made of cotton and worn by all castes, although distinctions were also made. The thread is equal to the height of a man which is measured in terms of ninety-six times his four fingers. These four fingers symbolize the four states of the inner essence of man. They are waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and silence (Mā. U.). On the other hand, the three folds of the cord represent the three *guṇas* or the three subtle elements (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*) which make up primal matter, from which the universe is evolved. In order that the *sattvaguna* or good quality of reality may predominate in a man the cord is twisted upward. The three threads remind one that he must repay three debts: to one's ancestors, the ancient seers, and the gods. The knot which

²¹) Jan Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1965), p. 235.

²²) *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²³) See note no. 2 Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 465.

²⁴) *Die Religionen Indiens I: Veda und älterer Hinduismus*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

ties the three cords is called *Brahmagranthi* which symbolizes Brahma, Visnu, and Siva ²⁵).

Furthermore, one can view the cosmic significance of the *Upanayana* rite by looking briefly at another aspect of the sacred thread. The role of the sacred thread is to implement a cosmic and human unity. This primordial image serves to reveal the structure of the universe and to describe the specific situation of man. For example, the sacred thread is the spiritual bond holding together the universe and all beings (Ś.B. VII.3.2.13). In another passage the sun binds the worlds to itself by means of the thread (Ś.B. VIII.7.3.10). This same thread also binds man to the source of all life which keeps him alive but also dependent ²⁶).

After purifying the student with water (Ś.G.S. II.2.4-10) and initiating him (Ś.G.S. II.2-12), the teacher has the new initiate gaze at the sun (A.G.S. I.20.7). The sun represents the cosmic law which governs the entire universe. It is the place of immortality, the unchanging source of all consuming power ²⁷). The sun gives to the student vitality (*ojas*), physical strength (*bala*), and beauty. This act may also represent the acknowledgement of Agni as the ultimate teacher by the student. Agni is identified with the sun (R.V. III.2.14) and is the director of the rites or the great priest (R.V. VIII.49.1; VI.16.1; X.7.5). Nevertheless, the student is made to witness the symbol of the cosmic law. There is also a connection between the sun and rebirth. Gonda writes, "When the sun rises in the morning, the world is reborn, but with this this proces the ritual rebirth of the initiate who emerges from his hut may be regarded as runing parallel" ²⁸). Thus every morning the significance of the ritual process of which the student is a part is re-inforced.

25) Abbe J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (trans.) Henry K. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 161; see also Monier Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism* (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1891), p. 378.

26) Mircea Eliade, *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne: Studies in Religious Myth and Symbol* (trans.) J. M. Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), p. 170.

27) Heinrich Zimmer, "Death and Rebirth in the Light of India" in *Man and Transformation: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), p. 329.

28) *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

IV

In the course of this paper, it has become evident that there has been a certain amount of overlapping in the three levels that I have attempted to differentiate. This study has also shown that the *Upanayana* rite has the power to enable the initiate to leap over the dangers inherent in a particular stage of life. With the danger behind him, the initiate finds himself completely re-orientated. He is a totally different person. He also has a new relationship with society and the cosmos.

The initiate's existential condition has changed. From a position of structural invisibility, the initiate takes a leap to a secure position lacking ambiguity. The biological umbilical cord is cut. There is a return to an embryonic state to await his true, spiritual rebirth. This second birth transforms the initiate into a new being. He is now on a new and higher ontological plane.

This transformation also entails a social change. From inequality to equality, from irresponsibility to responsibility, from ignorance to enlightenment, from chaos to ordered social structure, these are some of the social changes that the *Upanayana* rite entails. Admitted to a new social status, encompassed by his new found vitality, the initiate in turn revitalizes the social order.

It has also been noted that the *Upanayana* is not without its cosmic significance. Through the initiation rite, the novice comes to know about the sacred tradition. He learns the *dharma* which supports and protects society and the universe from chaos. Man learns that he is only part of a cosmic whole. The sacred thread symbolizes to him the essential unity binding all social beings together in the universe. Although the sacred thread binds man and keeps him dependent, it also bestows upon him the sacred. In other words, the sacred becomes open to him. It becomes man's new possibility.

TAKING LEAVE

Prof. Dr. R. Pettazzoni founded the "International Review for the History of Religions" and baptized it "Numen", a short expressive title and a real "trouvaille". As the first editor-in-chief of this brand new journal Pettazzoni overcame the initial problems. After his death in 1960 as his successor my task was easier. Scholars now considered it as an honour to contribute to Numen. Articles flowed in, more than I could and would publish. By selecting only the best material I flatter myself with the hope that the scholarly standard of Numen has gradually risen. In the pamphlet "The History of Religions, 1950-1975", which I wrote for the Lancaster congress the subjects treated in Numen are listed. This list shows that Numen has in the course of the years published a rich variety of articles on important religio-historical themes.

Pettazzoni also took another important step. He inaugurated a series of monographs, entitled "Studies in the History of Religions" (Supplements to Numen) to which he contributed the first volume, "Essays on the History of Religions". Under my editorship the series has increased to thirty-seven volumes. Others will follow. In the same pamphlet it is said that also here the principle "varietas delectat" is realized.

There is a third kind of publication of the IAHR, i.e. the "International Bibliography of the History of Religions", which I managed to launch with the support of Unesco. Dr. H. Boas took great pains in compiling the volumes 1952-1956; Mr. Th. P. van der Steen was responsible for the volume of 1957 and Mr. Salich H. Alich devoted his bibliographical ability to the volumes 1958-1971.

The time has come to take leave from an editorial task which I always have fulfilled "con amore", and with satisfaction. I take pleasure in cordially thanking all those who have assisted me: the authors of articles and of monographs, the bibliographers and last but not least Mr. F. C. Wiedner Jr., the director of Brill, together with his staff, who have taken care that all the publications of the IAHR should be printed as handsomely as possible.

C. J. BLEEKER

At the 13th International Congress for the History of Religions, held in Lancaster (England) in August 1975, Prof. C. J. Bleeker informed the Executive Board and the International Committee of his desire to lay down the editorial burden which he had carried for so long—and, we may add, with such distinction and exemplary devotion—as of 31 December 1977 i.e., with the completion of vol. XXIV of *Numen*. By that date Prof. Bleeker will be almost an octogenarian and he felt that younger colleagues should take over.

At this point it may not be inappropriate to recall that Prof. Bleeker has served the International Association and its publications programme as Secretary-General of the IAHR (1950-1970) and in an editorial capacity since the inception of *Numen*—at first as Associate Editor, and after the death of Prof. Raffaele Pettazzoni in 1959 single-handedly as Editor-in-Chief. The IAHR and the new Editorial Board wish him many more years of fruitful scholarly labour, unburdened by administrative responsibilities and obligations.

Having taken note of Prof. Bleeker's wish, the Executive Board appointed a sub-committee to examine the editorial problems as well as the publications programme of the IAHR. The sub-committee's report was subsequently approved by the Executive Board and endorsed by the International Committee. The report recommended *inter alia* that an Editorial Board consisting (in alphabetical order) of Professors M. Heerma van Voss (Amsterdam), Eric Sharpe (Sydney), and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Jerusalem) should be in charge of IAHR publications, including *Numen*, as from 1 January, 1978. The Editorial Board will be assisted by an Advisory Board. The address of the editorial offices will be

The Editors, *NUMEN*

c/o Prof. Dr M. HEERMA VAN VOSS

Theological Institute of the University of Amsterdam

Heerengracht 514-516

1017 CC Amsterdam

NETHERLANDS

Instructions to authors wishing to submit MSS. to *Numen* will be published in vol. XXV no. 1 of the journal.

M. HEERMA VAN VOSS

ERIC SHARPE

R. J. ZWI WERBLOWSKY

KARMA AND REBIRTH IN THE UPANIŠADS AND BUDDHISM

BY

NOBLE ROSS REAT

University of Lancaster, England

The *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism have basically identical ideas on rebirth: Beings are, by ignorance, desire and will, entangled in an ongoing process of repeated birth and death conditioned by actions (*karma*) and operating in such a way that it is possible to link a given being to a chain of past existences. Both systems encourage release from the chronic trauma of birth and death through ethical conduct, wisdom and meditation. This similarity, coupled with the absence of a *Vedic* *karma*-rebirth doctrine, suggests that the *Upaniṣadic* and Buddhist doctrines may be diverging interpretations of a common, non-*Vedic* rebirth tradition.

In an attempt to cloak this non-*Vedic* rebirth idea in orthodoxy, the *Upaniṣadic* sages allude to *Vedic* verses, but these verses originally had no connexion with rebirth. The afterlife belief in the *Ṛg Veda* is simply that after death, the soul leaves the body ¹⁾ and enters heaven ²⁾ or hell ³⁾ or eternity ⁴⁾. A few verses mention "rejoining a body", but it is clear that these refer to a heavenly body and not another mortal body ⁵⁾. Though heroes and holy men ⁶⁾ have better prospects in after-life than the wicked and irreligious ⁷⁾, the main factor determining one's eternal fate is the whim of the gods, hopefully to be swayed by prayer and sacrifice ⁸⁾. The thundering question of the *Veda* is "what

1) *Ṛg* 10.16.1; 10.18.11; 10.14.7-8.

2) *Ṛg* 9.113.11; 10.16.4.

3) *Ṛg* 4.5.5; 9.73.8; 10.152.4.

4) *Ṛg* 9.113.11.

5) *Ṛg* 10.14.8; 10.16.5; 10.56.1; 10.68.11. In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.1.8.6 the supreme reward is to be born in heaven with one's own body. Cf. *Ṛg* 10.15.4.

6) *Ṛg* 10.154.2.

7) *Ṛg* 4.5.5; 9.73.8.

8) *Ṛg* 10.14.8; 10.16.1; 10.18.11.

god shall we adore with our oblation?"⁹⁾ The *Upaniṣadic* sage answers "*Ahaṃ brahmāsmi*" "*I am Brahman*"¹⁰⁾.

This sudden about face from the concerns of the *Veda* may be accounted for by two non-*Vedic* teachings which found expression in both the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism: 1) The doctrine of rebirth conditioned by *karma* and 2) *yogic* techniques. The doctrine of *karma* and rebirth wrested man's destiny from the gods and placed it squarely in his own hands, and *yogic* techniques shifted the location of the divine from outside man to inside him, replacing the ritualistic religion of the Aryans with the contemplative religion of India. The overriding concerns of both the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism are the same, the responsibility and divinity of man. These two concerns meet in the theory of *karma* and rebirth, the arena in which man acts out his responsibility and the process by which he attains divinity.

Folk Explanations of Rebirth

The *Upaniṣads* preserve what appear to be several very ancient folk explanations of the mechanism of rebirth. The process of rebirth described in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 6.2.15-16, for example, is probably based on the common folk-belief that conception is caused by eating a plant with a soul in it. (See Fig. 1).

The passage turns on the funeral fire, the setting which is the occasion of most of the *Vedic* speculation on afterlife. But there is none of the *Vedic* pleading with gods¹¹⁾ to transport the deceased to heaven; instead the process is entirely mechanical, determined by the merit of the dead man. Those who practice the religion of the *Veda* attain the promise of the *Veda*, the World of the Fathers¹²⁾, but the World of the Fathers has become the undesirable alternative in the *Upaniṣads*, the path of perpetual rebirth.

Those who by sacrificial offerings, charity and austerity (*tapas*) conquer the worlds, they pass into the smoke (of the cremation fire) from the smoke into the night, from the night into the half-month of the waning moon...

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 6.2.16 (R)¹³⁾

9) *Rg* 10.121.

10) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.10.

11) *Rg* 10.16.4; 10.154.2; 10.15.14; 9.113.7-11.

12) *Rg* 10.14.7-8; 10.16.1.

13) (R) = Radhakrishnan, *The Principle Upaniṣads*. Unwin, 1953.

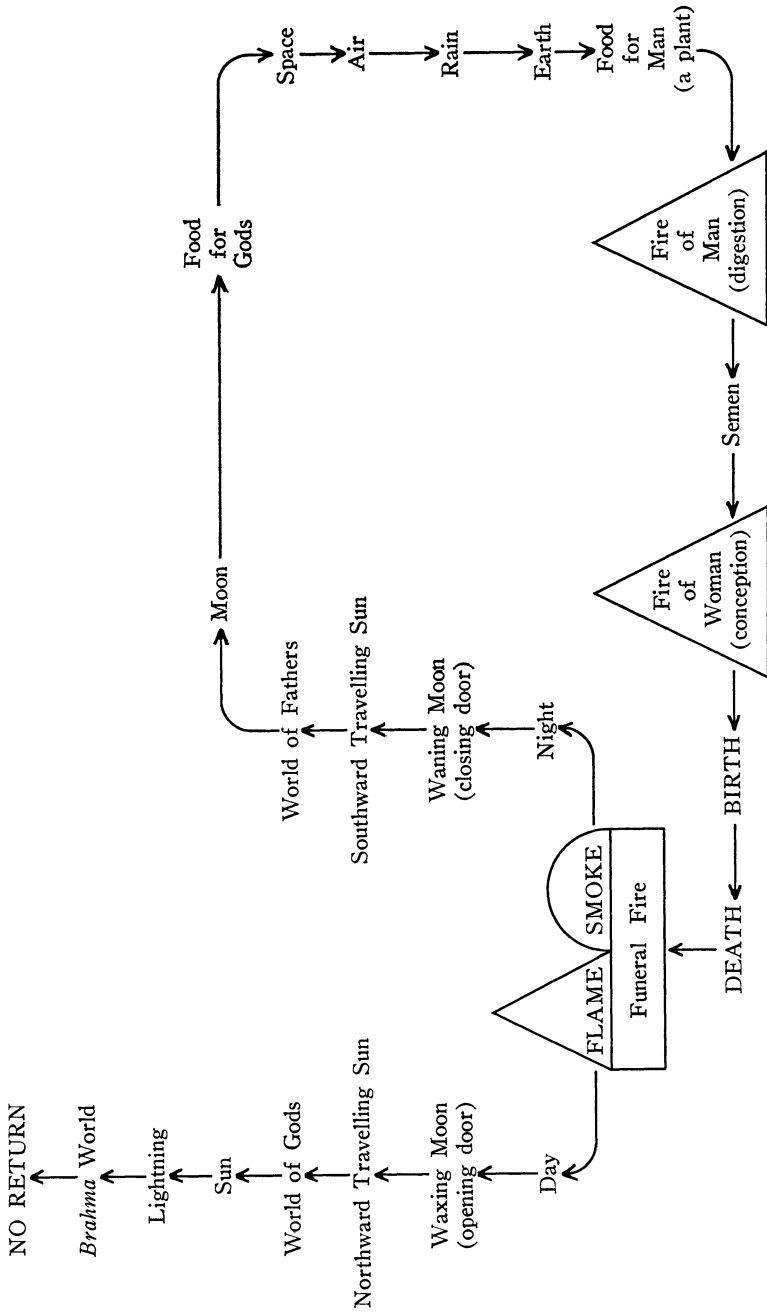


Fig. 1. The Path of the Gods and the Path of the Fathers. Paths of the souls of the released and the ignorant. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.15 & 16.

Shut out of heaven by the closing door of the waning moon, the unreleased soul enters the World of the Fathers, no longer the eternal state of bliss described in the *R̥g Veda* ¹⁴), but merely a temporary state until one enters the moon and becomes food for the gods.

The *Upaniṣads* hold that food sustains the mental as well as the physical being:

Food, when eaten, becomes threefold; its coarsest portion becomes the feces; its middle (portion) flesh and its subtlest (portion) mind.

Chāndogya 6.5.1 (R)

The gods are sustained by the subtler portions of the soul, which becomes their body and mind, and thus is not involved in the process of rebirth, but remains aloof in the divine consciousness.

4. With three-fourths *Puruṣa* went up: one-fourth of him again was here...

3. All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.

R̥g Veda 10.90.4 & 3 (G) ¹⁵)

The course part of the soul passes into "this space" (*eva ākāśam*) accumulating materiality as it enters air, rain and earth, three of the four great elements. Then it resides in a plant, waiting for the addition of the last great element—fire. In Indian thought, fire is life. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, one can perceive the fire in man in the warmth of the body and by hearing the blaze when the ears are covered, the same fire as the cosmic blaze of the sun ¹⁶).

This is the universal fire which is here within a person, by means of which the food that is eaten is cooked ¹⁷).

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 5.9. (H) ¹⁸)

The ignorant man, however, fails to perceive that the digestive fire consuming food within him is only part of the universal fire in which he himself is consumed as food.

Truly, indeed, beings here are born from food, when born they live by food, on deceasing they enter into food.

Taittirīya 3.2. (H)

¹⁴) *R̥g* 9.113.7-II.

¹⁵) (G) = Griffith, Ralph T. H., *Hymns of the R̥gveda*, Chowakhamba, Varanasi, 1963.

¹⁶) *Chāndogya* 3.13.7 & 8.

¹⁷) Cf. *Maitrī Up.* 6.17; 6.26; 6.34.

¹⁸) (H) = Hume, Robert Ernest, *The Thirteen Principle Upaniṣads*. Oxford Press, 1921.

Everything here is food for death... Death, verily, is a fire. It is the food of water (*āpas*). He wards off (*apa-jayati*) repeated death, (who knows this).
Bṛhadāraṇyaka 3.2.10 (H)

Here, water consumes (i.e. extinguishes) the fire, and similarly, in Buddhism *nirvāṇa* means literally “having been blown out”¹⁹), that is, the fire of life. Fire is an especially evocative symbol of life which continues in repeated rebirth. The individual fire, having burned itself out leaves a dead ash, but the energy of that fire continues to exist, and may, one can imagine, kindle another fire somewhere else. On the other hand, the present fire can, while still burning, create a new fire, verifiably its offspring. Similarly, the individual is of dual origin: verifiably the offspring of his parents and mysteriously the continuation of a previous life. Thus, the result of offering food in the fire of man is semen, a form of energy which, offered in the fire of woman, gives rise to a new individual, who, it would seem derives

FIRE	HEAVENLY (that world)	RAIN CLOUD	WORLDLY (this world)	MAN	WOMAN
FUEL	sun	year	the earth	open mouth	sexual organ
SMOKE	light rays	clouds	fire	breath (<i>prāṇa</i>)	hairs
FLAME	day	lightning	night	speech	vulva
COALS	quarters	thunder bolt	moon	eye	insertion of penis
SPARKS	intermediate quarters	thunder	stars	ear	pleasure
OFFERING	faith (<i>śraddhā</i>)	<i>soma</i>	rain	food	semen
RESULT OF OFFERING	<i>soma</i>	rain	food	semen	person

Fig. 2. The Five Fires. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.9-13

¹⁹) Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics*, Unwin, 1970, p. 175.

the energy for his existence partly from the living energy of his parents, and partly from the potential energy of the unidentified soul which his father consumed as food. (See Fig. 2).

Immediately preceding *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 6.2.15 is a series of verses explaining explicitly the interrelationship of the five fires that together constitute the universal fire. These are: 1) the heavenly fire (that world) 2) the atmospheric fire (the rain cloud) 3) the earthly fire (this world) 4) the digestive fire (of man) 5) the sexual fire (of woman). The constituents of each of the five fires correspond to fuel, smoke, flame, coals, and sparks, thus establishing a correspondence between the five aspects of the universal fire.

Further, the result of the offering made by the gods in each fire becomes the offering in the next fire, until finally the person (*puruṣa*) emerges from the sexual fire. The unreleased person, in turn, eventually becomes food for the gods who, thus sustained, continue to make offerings in the heavenly fire. The *Vedic* doctrine that the gods are sustained by sacrifice and ritual is subtly transformed from an assertion of the vital role of ritual in maintaining order in the universe, to a condemnation of ritual as the process by which man is kept in ignorance of his true identity and thus serves the gods by staying within their food chain.

Whoever knows thus "I am *Brahman*" becomes this all. Even the gods cannot prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their self. So whoever worships another divinity thinking that he (the worshipper) is one and (*Brahman*) another, he knows not, he knows not. He is like an animal to the gods. As many animals serve man, so does each man serve the gods (as food) . . . Therefore it is not pleasing to those (gods) that men should know this.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1.4.10 (R)

Buddhism, like the *Upaniṣads*, preserves in its canon folk ideas on rebirth alongside the more analytical doctrine. Several of the Buddhist metaphors also associate fire with existence and rebirth.

Brethren, all is on fire (*āditta*) . . . On fire with the blaze of lust, the blaze of ill-will, the blaze of infatuation, the blaze of birth, decay and death, sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair²⁰).

Saṃyutta-nikāya IV, p. 10 (PTS) 21)

20) Cf. *Saṃyutta* I, p. 31, and burning house parable in *Saddharmapundarika* III, 39 f. For the "Eleven Fires", see Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics*, p. 177.

21) (PTS) = *Pāli Text Society* translation, Luzac Co. Page nos. refer to Pāli text.

In Buddhism, burning (*āditta*) is a symbol of the incessant consumption of impermanent beings on all levels, human and divine. The gods also die.

'Tis food both gods and men chiefly desire.
Who may that creature be, demon or sprite
Who, unlike them, hankers not for food?

Samyutta-nikāya I, p. 32 (PTS)

The four “foods” in Buddhism are solid food, contact, volition, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Craving and delight regarding any of these “foods” results in becoming, rebirth, decay and death²²). Note the resemblance of the ideas in these early Buddhist passages on food and burning (*āditta*) to the *Upaniṣadic* passage on *Aditi*, “the devourer”, who created the universe to feed himself.

He brought forth all this whatsoever exists here...
Whatever he brought forth, that he resolved to eat.
Verily he eats (*atti*) everything, therefore the *aditi*—nature of *Aditi*.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1.2.5 (R)

In the *Veda*, *Aditi* is an all-encompassing deity.

Aditi is the heaven, *Aditi* is mid-air, *Aditi* is the Mother and the Sire and Son... *Aditi* is all that hath been born and shall be born.

Ṛg Veda 1.89.10 (G)

Now, the complexity of Buddha’s pun with *āditta* (“on fire”) becomes clearer. The Pāli *āditta* (Sanskrit *ādipta*) meaning “on fire” calls to mind the ambiguous Sanskrit word *aditi* which may mean “infinite” from association with the goddess *Aditi*, or may mean “having nothing to give” from *adāna*. In addition, *ādi* in Sanskrit and Pāli means “beginning” or “starting point”. Given the Indian love of fanciful etymologies based on world-play, the Buddha’s use of *āditta* in this context calls to mind a broad set of phonological associations which might be summarized: “*Āditta* (burning) is the beginning (*ādi*) and end (Sanskrit *Aditi* “devourer”), all-encompassing (*Vedic* goddess *Aditi* and Sanskrit *aditi* “infinite”), yet with nothing to give (*aditi* from *adāna*)”.

In the Buddhist *Milindapañha* the individual is compared to a fire which may ignite another fire, thus illustrating rebirth without transmigration.

22) *Samyutta* II, p. 101.

"Suppose a man, O king, were to light a lamp from another lamp, can it be said that one transmigrates from, or to, the other? ... Just so, great king, is rebirth without transmigration."

Milindapañha p. 71 (SBE) 23)

Without transmigration of an entity, asks King Milinda, how is it that one does not escape the consequence of his evil deeds? Suppose, answers Nāgasena, that a man were to set fire to a village by careless use of an oil lamp. Would the king find him guilty, or would he accept the argument, "The flame of the lamp ... was one thing; the fire which burnt your village was another thing"? 24).

"In spite of whatever the man might say, the one fire was produced from the other".

"Just so, great king, it is one name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*) which has its end in death, and another name-and-form which is reborn. But the second is the result of the first, and is therefore not set free from its evil deeds".

Milindapañha p. 47 (SBE)

Both similes suffer a common fault, though, in that the first fire produces a second while still alive, whereas rebirth occurs after death. Nāgasena gives a more satisfying fire simile in the example of a lamp burning all night.

Is it the same flame that burns in the first watch of the night, Sir, and in the second? ... Just so, O king, is the continuity of a person or thing *dhmma* maintained. One comes into being and another passes away; and the rebirth is, as it were, simultaneous (*apubbaṃ acarimaṃ*). Thus neither as the same nor as another (*na ca so na ca añño*) does one go on.

Milindapañha p. 40 (SBE)

Another common feature of the metaphorical explanation of rebirth in the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism is the comparison of human rebirth to "rebirth" in the plant kingdom. The mango is an especially popular example:

This person frees himself from these limbs just as a mango, or a fig or a berry releases itself from its bond; and he hastens again, according to the entrance and place or origin, back to life.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.3.36 (H)

"A being born here, O king, dies here. Having died here, it springs up elsewhere. Having been born there, there it dies ... It is like the case of a man who, after eating a mango, should set the seed in the ground. From

23) (SBE) = *Sacred Books of the East* translation. Motilal Barnarsidas, Delhi. *Milindapañha* by T. W. Rhys-Davids.

24) Cf. *Rg* 7.59.12.

that a great tree would be produced and give fruit. And there would be no end to the succession, in that way, of mango trees".

Milindapañha p. 77 (SBE)

These similes suffer the same weakness as some of Nāgasena's fire similes in that the second tree is produced while the first still lives. Again, though, Nāgasena makes it clear that the simile is primarily to illustrate the causative role of *karma* in rebirth²⁵).

The Upaniṣads and Buddhism also employ a simile comparing a man to a tree,

1. As is a mighty tree, so, indeed, is a man; his hairs are leaves and his his skin is its outer bark...
4. A tree when it is felled springs up from its root in newer form; from what root does a man spring forth when he is cut off by death?
5. Do not say "from the semen", for that is produced from what is alive (men). A tree springs also from the seed. After it is dead it certainly springs again.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 3.9.28 (R)

Here, the continuity between parent and offspring is recognized as different from the continuity between rebirths. Both men and trees produce seed from which offspring arise, but they are also both subject to rebirth when they are cut down. The condition for rebirth in the case of the tree is the surviving root. In the case of man, the condition for rebirth is ignorance and desire.

6. If a tree is pulled up with the root, it will not spring again. From what root does a mortal spring when he is cut off by death?

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 3.9.28 (R)

The next verse criticises the idea of birth as an origin: "When born, he is not born, for who should create him again?"²⁶). Birth is not a beginning, but only a continuation. The tree has its origin in the seed, but when it springs from the root, it is not said to be born; the same tree merely continues to exist. Man too, is said to be born from semen, but really he is like the cut off tree. The superstructure falls at death, but the root structure of ignorance, desire and *karma* remains firm and he comes again into existence²⁷). Buddhism contains a similar tree-man simile:

It is just as if there were a tender sapling, the roots whereof going downward and across bring upward all the juice... (If a man) were to cut

25) Cf. parable of the mango thief, *Milindapañha*, p. 72.

26) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.9.28.7.

27) Cf. *Kaṭha Uṣ.* 2.3.1; *Bhagavad Gīta* 15.1.

down that tree at the root... and draw out the roots even to the rootlets and root fibres... verily that tender sapling... would be... a no-thing incapable of arising again in the future... Even so in him who contemplates the misery in all that makes for grasping... Such is the ceasing of this entire mass of ill.

Samyutta-nikāya II p. 90 (PTS)

These ancient fire and tree similes in Buddhism are plyed to the service of the Buddhist view of rebirth and used to explain rebirth without a transmigrating entity. The *Upaniṣads*, on the other hand, normally do incorporate a transmigrating entity in their theory of rebirth. Thus, they attribute the energy of the fire in their similes to the person (*puruṣa*) in the fire. Similarly, the plant arises from its "subtle essence" in the seed, and presumably passes this essence on to its own seeds. In one passage a teacher asks his disciple to break open the seed of a plant and asks him what he sees in it:

"Nothing at all, Venerable Sire". (The teacher said)
 "My dear, that subtle essence which you do not perceive, verily, my dear, from that the very essence of this great *nyagrodha* tree exists... That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for its self. That is the true. That is the self. That art thou (*tat tvam asi*)".

Chāndogya 6.12 (R)

Buddhism, however, also contains a few passages suggestive of a transmigrating entity. In the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhasutta* ²⁸), immediately after Buddha reprimands *Sati*, the fisher-monk, for asserting that "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*) is a transmigrating entity, Buddha says:

But if, monks, there is here a coitus of the parents and it is the mother's season and the *gandhabba* is present, it is on the conjunction of these three things that there is conception.

Majjhima-nikāya I. p. 226 ²⁹) (PTS)

V. F. Gunaratna says the *gandhabba* refers to the "mental content of the terminal thought of a dying person" ³⁰). This is true in the light of the overall attitude of Buddhism, but here it almost certainly refers to some sort of spirit which animates the person ³¹). Orthodox Bud-

28) *Majjhima* no. 38.

29) Cf. *Majjhima* II, p. 157.

30) V. F. Gunaratna, "Rebirth Explained", *The Wheel*, nos. 167-9, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1971, pp. 59-60.

31) In the Sanskrit, *gandharvas* are said to be the cause of "possession", (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.7.1). They have special power over women and an incessant desire to copulate. (Monier-Williams Sanskrit dictionary).

dhism admits the possibility of being reborn a spirit or ghost (*petta*), but the process is the same as regular rebirth. Immediately upon death the effects of *karmic* energy manifest as a *petta*, usually an unhappy, tormented creature, who also dies eventually and is reborn, hopefully as something else.

Now, let a brief treatment of folk-explanations of release suffice here. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 6.2.15, depicted in *Fig. II*, the enlightened sage passes into the flame of the funeral fire, into the day (symbol of the divine light), into the half-month of the waxing moon (an opening door), into the half-year of the north travelling sun (going into summer), into the world of the gods. Then he goes beyond the multiple gods into the sun (*ādityam*), which calls to mind the passage: "Death (*Aditi*, the devourer) becomes his body" ³². (The sun, we now know, burns with an atomic blaze that converts matter into pure energy). Thence he goes to lightening, (*vaidyutam*) a symbol of enlightenment, and thence to the "world of *Brahma*". "Of these is no return". Similarly, in Buddhism there is the "no returner" (*anāgāmin*) who either achieves release in this body or is reborn in the celestial realms where release is guaranteed.

Theoretical Explanations of Rebirth

In addition to these folk explanations of rebirth, which it seems, are survivals in the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism of a more ancient rebirth theory, both systems present their own theoretical explanations of rebirth. These theoretical treatments represent the development of the ancient theory in the two diverging philosophical systems. On the surface, the *Upaniṣadic* and Buddhist systems appear to be poles apart, but the difference is primarily terminological, and once a correspondence between terms has been established, even the theoretical developments of the ancient theory are strikingly similar.

Since actions (*karma*) are held to be an accurate barometer of the state of mind, it is possible to say, in both systems, that *karma* determines rebirth. But both systems place the physical act in the service of *desire*, a mental state arising upon contact with the outer world. *Contact* arises without value judgement in three phases

1) *physical contact* of, for example, eye with visible objects,

32) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.2.7. See above.

2) *feeling* without differentiation 3) *perception*, differentiation without valuing³³). *Karma* arises in both systems only when ego-centric value is imposed on this interaction between the inner and outer world. Thus, one desires, and as a consequence of desire, acts willfully to acquire the maximum of the type of contact which he interprets to be favourable. The Buddhist formula of conditioned genesis (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) explains the process thus; without even mentioning *karma*:

Contact conditions sensation.
Sensation conditions desire.
Desire conditions clinging.
clinging conditions becoming.
Becoming conditions birth.

The *Upaniṣads* explain a similar process subordinating actions to desire:

A person consists of desire. As is his desire, so is his will; as is his will, so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.5 (R)

The basis of desire in Buddhism is the selfish division of experience into pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. On one level, the following *Upaniṣadic* passage also refers to such a division:

In it (*Brahman*) there is no diversity. He goes from death to death, who sees in it, as it were, diversity.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.19 (R)

Desire, or craving, resting on differentiation, is the motivating force of rebirth:

When a being lays aside this body and rises up again in another body, for that I declare craving to be the fuel.

Saṃyutta-nikāya IV p. 400 (PTS)

If a person knows a self as "I am this" then wishing what and for desire of what should he suffer in the body?

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.12 (R)

The active side of desire is will. Will is the highest faculty of the mind. It is the faculty which, if well directed effects progress in a

33) This follows the first three of the Buddhist *five aggregates*: form, sensation and perception, but note resemblance of *Upaniṣadic* ideas in *Katha* 1.3.3; and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.2.1-9.

positive direction, or if slack or perverted leads to downfall. Given the desires which arise automatically out of contact, the will dictates the acts.

Monks, I say that will (*cetana*) is action. When one wills, he acts by deed, word or thought.

Anguttara-nikāya III p. 145

If the process of becoming is compared to a nail being driven into a block of wood, desire is the hammer, will is the muscle behind the hammer, and *karma* is the grain of the wood. The grain (*karma*) determines the path of the nail once the force of desire has been applied by will. A well directed hammer blow drives the nail straight home, whereas a series of wild blows bends the nail and leaves it hopelessly stuck. The enlightened one, in both systems, is not subject to the directionality of *karma*, for he is no longer driven by desire and will.

Him (who knows this), these two (desires for sons and wealth) do not overcome—neither the thought “Hence I did wrong” nor the thought “Hence I did right”. Verily, he overcomes them both. What he has done and what he has not done do not affect him.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.22 (H)

Though both systems hold that the will as expressed through *karma* directs the course of rebirth in a happier or more miserable state, neither system values a fortunate rebirth as such. The only value in a “good” rebirth is that such a person is more likely to lead the sort of life that is conducive to release from *saṃsāra*. Both systems, then, are concerned not with gaining a happy rebirth, but with stopping rebirth. In Buddhism suffering (*dukkha*) has three categories.

1) ordinary suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*) 2) temporary pleasure which turns to suffering (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*) 3) *dukkha* as any conditioned state (*saṃkhāra-dukkha*)³⁴. Thus, even the fine material (*rūpa-loka*) and non-material realms (*arūpa-loka*), where there is no suffering in the normal sense, are both classified as *dukkha* since they are conditioned and subject to change. The *Upaniṣads*, too, belittle the transient good fortune that is the result of good *karma*.

That self is dearer than a son, is dearer than wealth, is dearer than all

34) Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, Gordon Fraser, New York 1967 p.p. 19 f.

else... If one who speaks of anything else than the self as dear, one should say, "He will lose what he holds dear" he would indeed be likely to do so.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1.4.8 (H)

Since there is no overlord in control of rebirth, fortunate or unfortunate rebirths cannot be viewed as reward and punishment in either system. Instead the effects of *karma* are pictured more as the working out of affinity between mind and situation. The evil doer is reborn in a painful state, not because he is being punished for his actions, but because of his affinity for pain. Ignorance sees an illusory distinction between the evil doer and the pain he causes. Actually, he is, or becomes, that very pain.

Deeds (*kamma*) are one's own, brahman youth, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, deeds are arbiters. Deeds divide beings... by lowness and excellence.

Majjhima-nikāya III, p. 203 (PTS)

According as one acts (*Vkr*), according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.5 (H)

Good deeds produce good births, but even good deeds always bear fruit and leave one entangled in impermanent existence. Ignorance, not evil, is on both systems, the great enemy. Wisdom, however, is also confined to the willful, *karma* producing part of the individual. Buddhism locates wisdom specifically in the *saṃkhāra* (mental formations) aggregate, along with other positive and negative qualities of the mind. Wisdom is, then, only a special case of desire and will, and of itself, insufficient to overcome rebirth. Buddhist wisdom consists of right thought and right view. Right thought is the behavioral side of wisdom, associated primarily with renunciation, love, and non-violence. Right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*) is, of course, the Buddhist view, the Four Noble Truths. But *sammā diṭṭhi* is, in Buddhism, an impossibility, since all views (*diṭṭhi*) are ultimately false.

And when man takes not to himself a view,
With virtue dwells, with insight (*vipassanā*) endowed,
And hath all greed for pleasures here expelled
Then goes he to the bed-of-womb no more.

Sutta-nipāta 152 (SBB) ³⁵⁾

35) (SBB) = *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* translation, Oxford Press.

Vipassanā (*vi* + *passa* = “see into”) is not in the realm of mental formations. It is an intuitional insight into the true nature of things, beyond discursive thought, and attainable through a set of meditational practices explicitly set forth in the early Buddhist scriptures. Similarly, in the *Upaniṣads*, the self is *neti, neti* “not this, not that”. It may be experienced, according to *Rāmānuja*, or entered into as a unity according to *Śaṅkara*, but not understood.

21. Let a wise *Brāhmaṇa* after knowing him (*ātman*) alone, practice the (means to) wisdom. Let him not reflect on many words, for that is a mere weariness of speech.
22. ... This self is *neti, neti*. He is incomprehensible for he is never comprehended. He is indestructable, for he cannot be destroyed.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.21-22 (R)

Like Buddhism, only less explicitly, the *Upaniṣads* prescribe meditational practices as the path which can free one from the impulsion of desire and will.

On knowing him, in truth, one becomes an ascetic... They, having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds, led the life of a mendicant.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.22 (R)

Those who know this as such and those who meditate with faith in the forest on the truth pass into the flame (of the cremation fire).

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 6.2.15 (R)

Therefore let a man perform one observance only. He should breathe in and breathe out wishing, “Let not the evil of death get me”.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 1.5.23 (R)

Desire and will, the properties of the controlling faculty of the individual, comprehend all mental states from ignorance to wisdom, and without the meditational techniques, the system is closed; wisdom becomes only more and more sophisticated, becomes mere sophistry. “Many words are a mere weariness of speech”. In practising meditation, however, one seeks to transform the highest and most mysterious part of his being, his very consciousness. Up to this point, I have dealt only with the finite individual who breaks up at death, leaving *karmic* energy, and as a specific personality ceases to exist. Both systems, however, postulate an impersonal level of being by which identity may be established between two or more distinct personalities in space-time. And if anyone doubts that the Buddhist doctrine, as noncommittal as it is, does affirm a specific connexion between reborn

beings, let him recall the numerous descriptions of the precise recall by the *tathāgata* of his former births:

In such a place such was my name, such my family, such my caste, such my food, such my experience of discomfort or of ease, and such the limits of my life.

Digha-nikāya I. p. 81 (SBB)

The doctrine persists in the *Vissuddhimagga* where the precise method for recall of specific past lives is given³⁶). If the Buddhist no-self doctrine seems uncomfortable with the idea of rebirth, the *Upaniṣadic ātman* doctrine fares no better. In a sense, all births are eruptions of the underlying *ātman*, but this does not explain the ethical facet of rebirth, whereby the will, desire and action of a specific limited individual shape the life of a specific future individual. The *ātman* itself is not affected by *karma*.

Verily, he is the great unborn self (*ātman*) who is this (person) consisting of *viññāna* (consciousness) among the senses... He does not become greater by good works or smaller by evil works... Desiring him only as their worlds, monks wander forth... He is incomprehensible... indestructable... unattached... unfettered.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.22 (R)

Clearly, the *ātman* of this passage is not the *ātman* refuted in Buddhist *anātman* theory. Buddhism rejects *ātman* as an individual, immortal soul. As the term is used here, it resembles Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, unborn, unconditioned, unattached and incomprehensible. *Ātman*, however, is the non-dual basis of the dualistic (subject-object) world, whereas *nirvāṇa* has no ontological function. Still, *ātman* and *nirvāṇa* are both the ultimate goal, reached through the process of rebirth, which occurs thus: 1) personality ends. 2) An impersonal stream of identity associated with "consciousness" Pāli *viññāṇa*; Skt. *viññāna*, flows on, its course determined by the desire, will and *karma* of many personalities. 3) Ultimately, the stream may flow beyond individuality and cease to support personalities. This is *ātman* or *nirvāṇa*. *Ātman*, in the above passage, is said to "consist of consciousness" (*viññāna-maya*) because it is realized through *viññāna*. *Nirvāṇa* is the cessation of *viññāṇa*, (*Nirvāṇa* = *nir* + *vāṇa* = "blown out") so it too, in a sense, is realized through *vinnāṇa*.

36) *Visud.* 13.13-28.

Do you not see, *bhikkhus*, that murkiness?... That is *Māra*, the evil one who is searching everywhere for the consciousness *viññāṇa* ³⁷) of Godhika... But Godhika, with *viññāṇa* not reinstated hath utterly ceased to live (*parinibbuto*).

Saṃyutta-nikāya I. p. 122 (PTS)

In the original texts, the conceptual, ontological distinction between *ātman* and *nirvāṇa* is the only real difference between the two theories of rebirth, and consciousness is admittedly not a precise or consistent term for the link between rebirths, though the ethical consequences of *karma* presuppose some such link. However, Buddhaghosa's "cognitive series", which comprehends an explanation of consciousness as well as rebirth, does much to clear up the vagueness in both rebirth theories and to reconcile the conceptual difference between *ātman* and *nirvāṇa*.

According to the "cognitive series" (*citta-vīthi*) theory, rebirth is only a special case of normal consciousness marked by the dissolution of one group of aggregates (i.e. the death of an individual) and the immediate arising of another. The *Visuddhimagga* says consciousness occurs in "moments". Buddhaghosa's seventeen "consciousness moments" are a collection of terms for perception and cognition drawn primarily from the *Abhidhamma*, but his theories are consistent with the earlier *Piṭaka* texts, and the seeds of his *citta-vīthi* theory may be seen in such passages as:

Visual consciousness (*viññāṇa*), your reverences, arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement; feelings are because of sensory impingement; what one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about obsesses one; what obsesses one is the origin of the number of perceptions and obsessions which assail a man in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye, past future, present ³⁸).

Majjhima-nikāya I. pp. 111-112 (PTS)

Buddhism holds both subject and object to be impermanent and conditioned, thus consciousness *viññāṇa* and phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*) depend on each other

37) The *Commentary* on this passage says that *viññāṇa* here refers to *paṭi-sandhi-citta*, "rebirth-linking mind", but this seems to be an interpolation by Buddhaghosa of his own *citta-vīthi* theory into the text. See below and next note.

38) Hearing, smell, taste, touch and mental consciousness are similarly analyzed. Again, in the *Commentary*, Buddhaghosa interpolates his more developed theory, equating "mental consciousness" with *vajjana* and *javana* and "mind" with *bhavāṅgacitta* in his explanation of "mental consciousness arises because of mind and mental objects". M.A. II. 77.

Even so, friend, *nāma-rūpa* (name-and-form) comes to pass conditioned by *viññāna*, *viññāna* conditioned by *nāma-rūpa*.

Samyutta-nikāya II p. 115

According to Buddhaghosa's *citta-vīthi* theory, consciousness moments and matter moments arise, persist, and dissolve with incredible rapidity, but the mind undergoes seventeen moments of change while one material moment arises, persists and dissolves. The seventeen moments are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| o) <i>bhavanga</i> | — stream of undisturbed being |
| 1) <i>bhavanga-atīta</i> | — past being |
| 2) <i>bhavanga-calana</i> | — vibration of being |
| 3) <i>bhavanga-upaccheda</i> | — arrest of being |
| 4) <i>pañcadvārā-vajjana</i> | — Five door (senses) advertance |
| 5) <i>pañca-vinnāna</i> | — Five fold sense consciousness |
| 6) <i>sampañicchana</i> | — reception |
| 7) <i>saṁtīrana</i> | — investigation |
| 8) <i>voṭṭhapana</i> | — determination |
| 9-15) <i>javana</i> | — apperception—seven moments for full interpretation of experience—associated with <i>samkhara</i> and productive of <i>karma</i> . |
| 16 & 17) <i>tadālabhāna</i> | — registration of experience |
| o) <i>bhavanga</i> | — undisturbed stream of being |

Thus active consciousness is the repeated disturbance of the steady flow of being *bhavanga* = *bhava*—"being + *anga*—"part"). *Bhavanga* remains ever the same quality-less stream, unaffected by the disturbances which constitute consciousness (*viññāna*). Each of these seventeen moment disturbances transfers its energy to the immediately succeeding disturbance, thus *viññāna* appears to be coherent and continuous, just as a flame appears to be continuous, though really the photons of light which we describe as "a flame" are different in any two instants.

The simile of the falling mango is often given as an illustration of the process. A man is in deep sleep under a mango tree. The wind dislodges a mango which falls, disturbing the sleeper. The deep, dreamless sleep is *bhavanga*. The wind hitting the tree is *bhavanga-atīta*. The subsequent swaying of the branches is *bhavanga-calana*. The falling of the mango is *bhavanga upaccheda* the "arrest" of the stream of being. Now the process enters into what may be termed "*viññāna*", the first three stages are "being" only (i.e. come from without). The waking of the man is *pañcadvārā-vajjana*. He removes his hat—

pañca — *vinṇāṇa*; picks up the fruit — *sampañicchana*; inspects it — *santīrana*; determines that it is a mango — *votthapaṇa*; and eats it — *javaṇa*, apperception. The after-taste is *tadālabhāṇa*, registration or retention of the experience. Then he goes back to sleep — return to *bhavāṇa*³⁹). The seven apperceptual moments are the basis of *karma*, and as such, interact specifically with the *saṃkhara* (mental formations) aggregate. They are pictured as a wave, the strongest moment being the fourth of the seven. It is this fourth moment of apperception, along with the object of consciousness which provides the *interruption* (first three stages) in the next series of seventeen moments. It is only in the apperceptual stage that the mind of an ordinary person is distinguishable from the mind of an *arahant*, whose apperceptions are “inoperative” (*kiriya-javana*) and do not influence the next seventeen moments. Thus an *arahant* sees things “as they are” because his own mind does not enter into his consciousness, which is moved only by the object at hand. In life his *bhavāṇa* is disturbed only from without, so at death it is no longer disturbed. He ceases to be upon the cessation of the last mental moment of his life. His consciousness subsides into *bhavāṇa* and is never more interrupted. For the unenlightened being, however, death is not much different from normal life. He dies, and the fourth apperceptual moment provides the initial disturbance in *bhavāṇa* which marks the beginning of a “rebirth” or new being. This first moment is called, in this case, *paṭisandhi* or “rebirth-linking”. The last moment of one’s life is the primary influence in the first moment of his next life, though, as with any other series of seventeen consciousness moments, the influence of past *karma* may also impinge upon the process. In Buddhaghosa’s explanation of consciousness and rebirth, the *bhavāṇa* bears striking resemblance to Buddhist *nirvāṇa* and Upaniṣadic *ātman*. Like the *ātman* it is “unborn” “eternal” “changless” in the sense that water remains the same though waves (*vinṇāṇa*) may pass through it. It “seems to act” though it does not, and it is unaffected by *karma*, just as the ocean “seems to act” to produce waves, but does not, and is not essentially affected by a wave passing through. Similarly, the undisturbed *bhavāṇa* is a concept compatible with many of the Buddhist paradoxes about *nirvāṇa*. “*Nirvāṇa* is both the same as

39) V. F. Gunaratna, “Rebirth Explained”, *The Wheel* nos. 167-9, pp. 30-7. Shewe Zan Aung, *Compendium of Philosophy*, (PTS) Luzac, 1967, pp. 25-36.

saṃsāra and different from it “might be explained, “*Nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* are respectively *bhavāṅga* in the undisturbed and disturbed states”. Or “The *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death” might be explained, “The *Tathāgata* does not exist in the normal sense of moving existence yet does exist in the undisturbed stream of being”⁴⁰). These statements jar the ear of one accustomed to the Buddhist practice of avoiding any conceptualization of *nirvāṇa*, but the task here is actually one of translation of Buddhist terms so they may be compared to *Upaniṣadic* terms. If we agree, for this comparison, to translate *Upaniṣadic ātman* into the Buddhist *bhavāṅga*⁴¹), we can go through *Yājñavalkya*’s theory of rebirth in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and square it at every point with the Buddhist theory as interpreted by Buddhaghosa.

- 4.3.36. 1) ⁴²) When this (body) gets to thinness . . . through old age or disease, 2) just as a mango . . . release itself from its bond, 3) even so this person frees himself from these limbs and returns again as he came to the place from which he started back to (new) life.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.3.36 (R)

1) Recalls the Buddhist theory of causes of death; exhausted *karma* (old age) or cutting off by stronger *karma* (disease). 2) Recalls Buddhist mango parables. (cf. also *Rg* 7.59.12). 3) “*Limbs*” refers to impermanent five-aggregates. “*Place from which he started*” refers to *bhavāṅga* — undisturbed being. “*Back to new life*” refers to the first thought moment (*paṭisandhi-vinnāna*) in the subsequent being.

- 4.4.2. 1) And when he thus departs, life departs after him. And when life thus departs, all the vital breaths (senses) depart

40) Cf. *Majjhima* I, p. 486.

41) In *Atthasālinī* p. 140, Buddhaghosa compares *bhavāṅga* with the *pabhasara-citta* “luminous mind” of *Anguttara* I, p. 10: “*Pabhasara-citta* is stained by foreign (*āgantuka*) defilements”. Buddhaghosa explains that *citta* is impure (*akusala*) because it “issues” (*from bhavāṅga*), though it is in essence pure because it is nonetheless of *bhavāṅga*, “as a tributary of the Ganges is like the Ganges” (and different from it). This *pabhasara-citta* is an example in the early texts of a concept compatible with the *Upaniṣadic ātman*. Though the idea is not developed in the *Pāli* texts, it became important in Mahayana in the form of “Buddha-nature” or “*Tathāgata-garbha*” which is indistinguishable from *ātman*. Cf. *The Lankavatara Sutra*, D. T. Suzuki, pp. 68 f. and *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, E. Conze, p. 84.

42) Numbers in the text correspond to numbers in the commentary immediately following.

after it. 2) He becomes one with *vijñāna*. What has *vijñāna* departs with him. 3) His knowledge and his work take hold of him as also his past experience.

1) Suggests the dissolution of the impermanent aggregates of the individual. 2) The *bhavanga* flows on. *Vijñāna* as the Buddhist *viññāna* is the “link” between births. 3) The state of mind at death and past *karma* disturb the *bhavanga* in the “next life”.

4.4.5. 1) That self is, indeed, *Brahman* consisting of consciousness (*vijñāna*) mind, life, hearing, earth, water air, ether, light and no light, desire and absence of desire, anger and absence of anger, righteousness and absence of righteousness and all things . . . 2) According as one acts... so does he become . . . As is his desire, so is his will; as is his will, so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, so he attains.

1) “That self” and “*Brahman*” refer to undisturbed *bhavanga*. “Consisting of consciousness” etc. is in Sanskrit rendered “*vijñāna-maya, manomaya*” etc. *Maya*, (from *√mā*, “to make”) in the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism, carries the connotation of illusion, thus, these qualities and faculties refer to the impermanent being, i.e. the disturbed *bhavanga*. That is to say, *bhavanga*, being, is disturbed (*maya*) by these qualities and faculties, and we mistakenly see the disturbance as the reality. The true reality, *Brahman*, comprehends all the conflicting qualities of disturbance. In Buddhism, the only “reality” is non-being, that is non-disturbance or *nirvāna*. 2) Refers to the various levels of *karma* production: *desire*-associated with sensual contact, *will*-associated with mental formations, *deed*-the physical culmination of sensual and mental processes, thus symptomatic of rebirth.

4.4.6. 1) The object to which the mind is attached, the subtle self (*liṅgam*) goes together with the deed . . . 2) exhausting the results of whatever works he did in this world, he comes again from that world to this world for (fresh) work. 3) This is for the man who desires. 4) But for the man who does not desire, he who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose desire is the self; his breaths (senses) do not depart (*ut + kram* — lit. “go up”). Being *Brahman*, he goes to *Brahman*.

1) The “object to which mind is attached” refers to the affinity for good or evil spoken or earlier, or more exactly to the *kamma-nimitta* and *gati-nimitta* of Buddhism which are said to be respectively a mental image of a past deed which will be most influential in the course of the next life, or the mental image of one’s destiny. 2) Again, recalls Buddhist view of cause of death, exhaustion of *karma* impelling one particular “existence”. 3) As in *paticca-samuppāda*,

desires condition attachment etc. 4) The man without desires is the *aranant*, who upon death ceases to exist in the normal sense of existence, i.e. disturbed *bhavanga*. At the end of his last thought moment, active consciousness ceases and only the undisturbed *bhavanga* flows on.

4.4.12. 1) If a person knows the self as “I am this”, 2) then wishing what, and for desire of what should he suffer in the body?

1) “I am in essence undisturbed being.” i.e. If he does not associate disturbed *bhavanga* with self, 2) he is not bound by desire to impermanent (*anicca*) existence, disturbed *bhavanga*, so suffering is over for him.

4.4.13. 1) Whoever has found and awakened (*pratibuddha*) to the self that has entered into 2) this perilous and inaccessible place (the body) . . . 3) indeed, he is the world itself.

1) As the Buddha is “awakened (*pratibuddha*) to *nirvāṇa*, 2) “Perilous place” indicates the impermanence and changeableness of *samsāric* existence. 3) He transcends individuality, having shorn himself of the attributes of impermanence, and enters pure undisturbed being. He becomes the ontological universe *bhavanga* as opposed to the phenomenological universe (*samsāra*).

4.4.14. 1) Verily, while we are here we may know this: if not we would be ignorant; great is the destruction. 2) Those who know this become immortal while 3) others go only to sorrow (*duḥkham*).

1) The ignorant (*avedir*) suffer great destruction, i.e. repeated old age and death 2) The awakened are immortal (*amṛtās*, “without death”), which is also to say “not born”. (See below 4.4.20). 3) Existence (disturbed *bhavanga*) is *dukkha*—First Noble Truth of Buddhism.

4.4.14. If one clearly beholds him as the self, as God . . . he does not shrink away from him.

Buddha’s teaching, in his words “goes against the stream” i.e. at first one is repelled by the thought of “cessation of existence” or annihilation of individuality. The same problem arises here. One must give up individuality and enter undifferentiated being.

4.4.20. This indemonstrable and constant being can be realized as one only. The self is taintless, beyond space, unborn great and constant.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka 4.4.2-20

Undisturbed *bhavanga*, i.e. *nirvāṇa* is *indemonstrable*, not accessible to reasoning, *constant*—not like impermanent *samsāra*; *one only*—not open to experience as such since that demands duality. *Taintless*—*nirvāṇa* is beyond the effects of past *karma*. *Unborn*—Buddhist logic demands that only that which is unborn, without origin, will not suffer death and dissolution. *Great*—ultimate attainment of man. *Constant*—extinction is perpetual and eternal.

PTAHIL E RUHA: PER UNA FENOMENOLOGIA DEL DUALISMO MANDEO

DI

MARIA VITTORIA CERUTTI

Milano

Oggetto del presente studio è l'esame di due figure del pantheon mandeo: Pthahil e Ruha. Lo scopo dell'analisi è duplice: in primo luogo tracciare alcune considerazioni tipologiche relative alla figura del demiurgo nel Mandeismo e, rispettivamente, nella sistematica gnostica; in secondo luogo far risaltare l'inadeguatezza di alcune impostazioni che i cultori del Mandeismo diedero dello studio del materiale mitologico mandeo.

1. *Pthahil come demiurgo*

Pthahil è un personaggio caratterizzato da specifici attributi demiurgici. Le fonti mandee, e in modo particolare il *Ginza* o *Sidra Rba*, ne presentano la figura e l'operato attraverso miti vari, non di rado tortuosi e talvolta in contraddizione fra di loro.

Pthahil fa parte del mondo della luce (quello che in altre fonti gnostiche è il *pleroma*). Questo vede ai suoi vertici, inaccessibile e lontana, la divinità suprema ¹⁾, la Prima Vita ²⁾, 'ineffabile' ³⁾ e 'straniera' ⁴⁾, la quale attraverso successive emanazioni ⁵⁾ dà luogo ad una Seconda Vita (Yosamin), ad una Terza Vita (Abathur), ad una Quarta Vita (Pthahil) e ad una schiera di *uthras* (spiriti della luce). Alcuni testi ⁶⁾ limitano questo processo 'emanativo' alla Terza Vita e

1) Talora superiore alla Prima Vita compare il Grande Mana da cui la Prima Vita emana (cfr. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza. Der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer*, Göttingen 1925, Parte Destra p. 66).

2) *Ginza* PD p. 143, 8.

3) E. S. Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, Leiden 1959, p. 171.

4) Drower, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

5) Drower, *op. cit.*, pp. 36 sg.

6) Drower, *op. cit.*, p. 151; *The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran*, Oxford 1937, p. 271.

parlano di Ptahil come del figlio di uno spirito della luce, Hibil Ziwa, e di una entità femminile di carattere infernale, Zahariel.

A Ptahil è attribuita la formazione del mondo e dell'uomo ⁷⁾. Questa, che meglio può essere talora qualificata come creazione, avviene in alcuni miti per esplicito volere della Prima Vita ⁸⁾, in altri invece appare voluta dalla Seconda o Terza Vita, eventualmente in contraddizione col volere della Prima Vita e 'contro' la Prima Vita ⁹⁾.

L'attività formatrice di Ptahil si manifesta attraverso vari tentativi malriusciti, imperfezioni, inaccortezze, leggerezze. In particolare, durante la formazione dell'uomo Ptahil accetta l'aiuto di entità maligne, o comunque ambigue, ed infere quali i demoni ed i Pianeti. Anzitutto la creatura umana, una volta formata, non riesce a reggersi in piedi ¹⁰⁾, tema consueto nelle antropogonie gnostiche e comunque in molte mitologie in cui entri un demiurgo caratterizzato da poteri solo relativi ¹¹⁾. Cosiscchè — in armonia con tutta questa tematica — Ptahil si vede costretto a salire alla Casa della Vita per chiedere una scintilla divina, l'anima (*nišimta* o *mana*), che possa vivificare l'inerte carcassa umana ¹²⁾. Ma anche qui troviamo una notevole varietà di sfumature, anzi, in certi casi, vere e proprie versioni contrastanti: talora è Ptahil che immette l'anima nell'uomo, oppure richiede alla Vita l'invio dell'anima nell'uomo da lui formato. Ovvero l'invio avviene per iniziativa dell'Essere supremo che ora appare necessitato ora invece deciso volontariamente a questo atto. Altrove l'invio da parte dell'Essere sommo è diversamente motivato ¹³⁾.

Ptahil, oltre ad essere il costruttore del corpo e del mondo (che viene talora nominato nei testi come 'la Casa di Ptahil') e il responsabile, a vario titolo e in varia misura, della discesa dell'anima dalle

7) Ginza, PD pp. 107, 12 sg.; 242, 27-243, 2.

8) O comunque della divinità suprema qualsiasi nome essa riceva; cfr. Ginza PD II, 33-34.

9) Ginza PD pp. 97, 21 sg.; pp. 67 sg.

10) Ginza PD pp. 107, 12-111, 5; pp. 242, 27-243, 2.

11) Nell'Ofitismo il primo uomo creato da Jaldabaoth è un meccanismo difettoso che non riesce a reggersi in piedi finchè Sophia non gli insufflerà la sostanza di luce (Ireneo, *Adversus Haereses* I, 30). Il demiurgo bogomilico, dopo aver modellato l'uomo e dopo aver tentato invano di insufflare la vita nel nuovo essere, ricorre a Dio per ottenere la vivificazione della creatura (cfr. Fred. J. Powike, Art. Bogomils, in: ERE vol. II, p. 784).

12) Ginza PD p. 243.

13) Cfr. infra.

sue sedi celesti, è anche colui che istituisce e definisce il cammino che l'anima dovrà percorrere nella sua ascesa dopo la morte alla dimora della Vita ¹⁴). Quata ascesa si configura come un passaggio a scopo nel contempo punitivo e purificatorio attraverso i *matarata*, 'purgatorii', governati da spiriti planetari nonchè da Ptahil medesimo e dai di lui figli.

Ulteriore caratterizzazione di Ptahil: a seguito di incidenti o circostanze sempre relativi alla creazione dell'uomo, egli subisce una vicenda di allontanamento o di punizione, che i miti narrano a tinte vivaci ricorrendo a immagini di incatenamento o imprigionamento in 'luoghi inferiori' ¹⁵), vicenda che si conclude con una riabilitazione nel mondo divino. Tale reintegrazione nel 'pleroma' è in alcuni testi designata ad avvenire nel Grande Giorno Finale ¹⁶), in altri (mi riferisco in modo particolare alle preghiere liturgiche) è presentata come già avvenuta ¹⁷).

Ma la figura di Ptahil è complicata anche da un altro aspetto, che si riferisce alla seconda figura che vogliamo fare oggetto di analisi, e cioè Ruha. Ptahil è colui che, come suona un passo del Ginza, produce 'tutta la formazione della tenebra', Ruha e i Sette (Pianeti) ¹⁸). Ruha, invece, in altri testi è un essere *originariamente* infernale, che da sempre si oppone dal mondo delle tenebre al sovrano del regno della luce e da sempre governa i regni inferi assieme al figlio e consorte Ur, con il quale genera i Sette ¹⁹). Altre volte i testi fanno Ruha figlia di due esseri originariamente infernali, Hag e Mag ²⁰), oppure se ne menziona uno solo e gli si dà il nome di Qin ²¹).

Una osservazione preliminare. Considerando il modo in cui gli esseri del mondo superiore e del mondo inferiore vengono all'esistenza, notiamo che i primi si susseguono sulla base di un processo di emanazione o talora di evocazione (la Prima Vita evoca la Seconda Vita, questa a sua volta la Terza Vita e secondo questo schema si procede nella

14) Drower, *Diwan Abatur or Progress through the Purgatories*, Città del Vaticano 1950, p.18.

15) Teodoro bar Konai, *Scolii*, XI, presso: H. Pognon, *Inscriptions mandâtes des coupes de Khouabir*, Parigi 1898, 99.

16) Cfr. la nota precedente.

17) Drower, C. P. p. 104.

18) Ginza PD p. 351, 30-31.

19) Cfr. infra.

20) Ginza PD pp. 154 sg.

21) Ginza PD pp. 158 sg.

generazione successiva e nella schiera degli *uthras*); gli esseri inferiori nascono invece per procreazione (Hag e Mag generano Ruha e la sorella di lei Zahariel; Ruha e Ur generano i Pianeti e la schiera di demoni). A parte è il caso di Ptahil, che talora appare emanato dalla Terza Vita, altrove è il frutto dell'unione di uno spirito della luce, frutto di evocazione (pare talvolta si tratti della Terza Vita stessa), con una entità femminile di carattere infero.

2. Medietà e ambiguità di Ptahil

Questa considerazione sul modo di venire all'esistenza nel mondo della luce e nel mondo delle tenebre ci porta a due ordini di osservazioni. Il primo ha un carattere più generale; il secondo riguarda in modo particolare Ptahil.

Il primo è il seguente: come abbiamo detto, la generazione per procreazione compare, generalmente, solo nel mondo infero e quando compare nel mondo superiore interessa e coinvolge una entità infera. Questo modo di procedere ci pare una eco della negatività della generazione, che è uno dei temi più costanti del sentire gnostico, nonché eco di una negatività del femminile, testimoniata a nostro parere in molti luoghi degli scritti mandei ²²⁾. Questa osservazione non ci pare infirmata nè dalla constatazione che anche il mondo della luce conosce delle coppie generative ²³⁾ nè dalla constatazione analoga che il mandeismo conosce un femminile divino con caratteristiche tutt'altro che negative ²⁴⁾. Infatti le coppie che compaiono nel mondo della luce hanno più carattere di 'principii', di ipostasi, di 'personificazioni' che non di entità personali, con una certa 'corposità', quali invece ci paiono essere le coppie infernali. E soprattutto: negativamente è presentata la procreazione, così come si dà nel mondo infero, dai miti che si riferiscono all'unione di Ruha e di Ur; essa assume due connotazioni ben precise: in primo luogo si qualifica come un incesto; in secondo luogo è direttamente rivolta *contro* il mondo della luce, si presenta come una sfida agli esseri della luce ²⁵⁾.

22) Drower, *The Alf Trisar Suialia*, in: JRAS 1941, pp. 101-126.

23) Padre e Madre, Destra e Sinistra, Palma da dattero e Sorgente: cfr. Drower, C. P. p. 107.

24) Drower, C. P. p. 107.

25) Ginza PD 99, 10-14: Ruha invita il figlio a giacere con lei affinché egli possa liberarsi dai ceppi in cui era stato legato dopo una lotta con Manda d̄ Hiia (Ginza pp. 92-94): 'Auf, schlafe bei deiner Mutter, damit du von Fessel

Il secondo ordine di considerazioni è il seguente: Ptahil si situa in modo estremamente critico fra due strutture generativo-emanative, egli stesso è inserito in queste due strutture: ora è visto come emanazione divina, ora invece come frutto dell'unione di uno spirito della luce e di un essere infero. E' per quest'ultima genealogia che in Ptahil si ha come un incrocio fra i due mondi, quello della luce e quello delle tenebre. Tale incrocio accentua la defettibilità di Ptahil e dipinge Ptahil come momento oltremodo critico di tutto un processo cosmogonico. Questa 'criticità' di Ptahil trova una rappresentazione assai efficace nel mito, là ove si parla di Ptahil come dell'autore di 'tutta la formazione della tenebra'.

Consideriamo più da vicino il mito in questione. Narra Ptahil: 'Attraverso il mio sesto grido sorse tutta la formazione della tenebra. Attraverso il mio settimo grido sorsero Ruha e i suoi sette figli'. Dopodichè il mito prosegue raccontando come Ptahil, al vedere quanto da lui era uscito, si scoraggiò e chiese: 'Dove venite voi Sette, mentre il vostro nome non era nella casa di mio padre? Dove venite voi Sette, mentre non avevo l'intenzione di crearvi?' Gli viene risposto che essi vengono per servirlo. Ptahil incautamente presta fede alle loro parole e li prende con sè. Allora 'la Casa gli fu tolta... fu posto in ceppi... poichè aveva fatto ciò che suo padre non gli aveva comandato e non si era attenuto ai discorsi di suo padre' 26).

Dunque, nel mondo divino (di cui Ptahil è e rimane un rappresentante) avviene ad un certo momento qualcosa di *non previsto* nella stessa economia divina, un qualcosa che ha immediatamente conseguenze funeste già per il divino (Ptahil è soggetto a una punizione e ad un brusco allontanamento) e che conseguenze non meno funeste avrà per l'umano; mi riferisco con questo ai testi ove si parla di Ruha e dei Pianeti che tentano di irretire il primo uomo, Adamo, e trascinarlo dalla loro parte, ma soprattutto al testo ove si afferma che i Pianeti, di cui Ptahil si vede costretto ad accettare l'aiuto al momento della

befreit werdest, mit der du gefesselt, die stärker als alle Welt ist'. Altre motivazioni dell'atto: affinché la forza di Ur possa essere raddoppiata (Ginza PD p. 100, 25-26); per poter conquistare tutto il mondo (101, 25-36); per generare dei figli che siano campioni potenti e valorosi nella lotta contro la Luce (Ginza PD p. 175, 12 sg.). Ma i risultati sono deludenti: i figli (i Pianeti e lo Zodiaco) sono dei veri e propri aborti e Ruha si dispera.

26) Ginza PD p. 351, 37-40.

formazione dell'uomo, gettarono nella creatura umana 'un certo spirito di se stessi', dunque qualcosa della loro malvagità ²⁷⁾).

Ora ci chiediamo: il mondo divino conosce degli 'incidenti', dei momenti critici, solo 'al livello' di Ptahil? E ancora: come si presenta il pleroma al di sopra di Ptahil, le altre emanazioni del divino?

Gli scritti mandei conoscono di frequente il tema della discordia fra esseri della luce, il tema della gelosia, della ribellione, della superbia fra le emanazioni della Vita; tali atteggiamenti vengono poi generalmente placati dalla saggezza della Prima Vita. Si narra ad esempio che la Seconda Vita, Yosamin, 'volle suscitare la guerra e porre la lotta nella casa del possente' ²⁸⁾). Posto per punizione presso le porte degli inferi, Yosamin alza grandi lamenti alla divinità somma, implorandone il perdono; ottenutolo, ritorna al luogo della luce. Anche di Abathur, la Terza Vita, i testi narrano una vicenda di allontanamento e di reintegrazione nel *pleroma* ²⁹⁾). Il fatto che questi episodi, che vedono protagonisti le prime emanazioni del divino, terminino con una riconciliazione con la divinità suprema non può cancellare la rilevanza della scissione che vediamo aprirsi nel divino. Se questa frattura all'interno del *pleroma* sia poi costitutiva dell'esistenza del mondo e dell'uomo, e lo sia ad un livello più alto ed anteriore rispetto a Ptahil ³⁰⁾, è un dato cui i testi non danno purtroppo indicazioni precise. Un testo interessante, a questo riguardo, è il terzo libro del Ginza, ove vediamo tre *uthras*, emanazioni della Seconda Vita, chiedere al padre il permesso di creare delle *Skinas* (le abitazioni nel mondo della luce) per se stessi ³¹⁾). E' questo un particolare estremamente significativo: esseri divini intendono dare luogo ad una creazione privata, ad un loro personale dominio. Un fatto grave, questo, perchè matura nelle zone più alte del *pleroma* e non nella ultima emanazione del divino, quale è, appunto, Ptahil.

Quanto ora detto mostra come il *pleroma* conosca, già nelle sue prime

27) Ginza PD pp. 242 sg.

28) Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, Giessen 1905 e 1915, I, p. 14.

29) Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, p. 2.

30) Che lo sia a livello di Ptahil è chiaro soprattutto dal mito riferito da Teodoro bar Konai e riportato dal Pognon (*op. cit.*, p. 50): 'Prima che il mondo esistesse vi era una grande forza ... sulle acque. Questa forza creò Abatur il quale creò Ptahil e gli ordinò di formare la terra e ... di creare gli uomini. Ptahil non obbedì a suo padre: creò le dieci nazioni ... Abatur allora maledisse il figlio'.

31) Ginza PD pp. 66 sg.

emanazioni, delle crisi (condanna e riabilitazione di Yosamin, la Seconda Vita; proposito dei figli della Seconda Vita di dare origine ad una creazione per sè). Tali crisi pare che culminino nella persona e nell'operato di Ptahil, non tanto nel senso che con Ptahil esse raggiungano il massimo della gravità (è vero anzi il contrario: esse sono tanto più gravi quanto più avvengono vicino ai vertici del mondo della luce), quanto piuttosto nel senso che esse rimandano sempre a Ptahil quale esecutore materiale dei progetti (in varia misura contrastanti coi voleri dell'Essere supremo) concepiti dalle successive emanazioni del divino ³²).

Dal punto di vista dell'esistenza del mondo e dell'uomo ci pare lecito allora vedere in Ptahil il punto cruciale di un mondo divino che insieme digrada e si degrada, fino al punto di toccarsi col mondo tenebroso (Ptahil è, secondo un già citato mito del Ginza, autore della 'formazione della tenebra'). Ci pare che questo digradare e degradarsi trovi commento efficace nell'immagine contenuta in un mito: la discesa di Ptahil è vista come un avvicinamento allo sterco e all'acqua torbida, al cui contatto lo splendore di Ptahil si attenua fino quasi a smorzarsi (particolare questo che nel contesto dell'intero mito serve ad anticipare e preparare la catastrofe successiva, cioè la difettosa creazione dell'uomo e l'inganno perpetrato dai Pianeti a danno di Ptahil ³³).

3. *La vicenda dell'anima e sue motivazioni*

Le osservazioni fin qui sviluppate ci portano ad una duplice conclusione. Innanzitutto ci pare che mai venga meno negli scritti mandei una intuizione del divino tipica della gnosi siro-egizia (come ha proposto di chiamarla Hans Jonas), la quale vede l'esistenza dell'uomo, delle realtà mondane ed eventualmente dell'elemento tenebroso, come conseguenza di una tragedia maturata all'interno del mondo divino.

In secondo luogo il materiale relativo a Ptahil, che si è esposto fino ad ora e che riguarda la sua defettibilità ³⁴) nonchè il suo essere

³²) Cfr. nota 9.

³³) Ginza PD p. 98, 22-32.

³⁴) Si che vorremmo accostare Ptahil a Sophia, da quello diversa ma affine in questo aspetto, cioè per il fatto di conoscere 'una storia di aberrazione e di caduta dall'ordine divino superiore, del quale è e continua ad essere membro anche durante il suo esilio di colpa' (H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston 1958, p. 313).

direttamente e continuamente coinvolto con il destino dell'uomo e della sua anima, illustra questo personaggio nella sua tipicità. Ptahil è autore di una creazione sfortunata e malriuscita, è suscettibile di errore, è responsabile dell'immissione dell'anima in un mondo inferiore, è un personaggio chiave del cammino che reintegrerà l'anima al regno della luce. Tutto questo permette di inserirlo nell'ambito della tipologia gnostica relativa al demiurgo, nonché nell'ambito dicerte sette di tipo dualistico a mezza via tra l'ambito gnostico e quello etnologico (le quali conoscono una figura demiurgica dal carattere ambivalente) ³⁵). Ma i medesimi tratti permettono anche di definire la sua specificità su questo generico sfondo. Ciò per cui Ptahil, a nostro giudizio, si differenzia dalle altre figure di demiurgo ambivalente, e in particolare dal demiurgo gnostico, è la sua appartenenza al mondo della luce, sia pure in quarta serie, e il fatto, collegato con questo, che egli è oggetto di una vicenda di condanna e di riabilitazione, di imprigionamento e di liberazione, e nel contempo è il responsabile della grande vicenda di imprigionamento e di liberazione dell'anima.

Sarebbe suggestivo poter trovare negli scritti mandei un complesso demiurgo-anima o vedere nella sorte del demiurgo mandeo una prefigurazione della sorte dell'anima ³⁶). Purtroppo i testi non sono espliciti in questo senso ³⁷).

Qui è da osservare che la grande vicenda di discesa e di risalita dell'anima conosce, ci sembra, essenzialmente due motivazioni. La prima motivazione è una richiesta dell'anima dal basso, da parte del demiurgo, allo scopo di vivificare l'inerte corpo umano. La seconda motivazione è un invio deciso dall'alto per rimediare alle carenze della creazione del demiurgo (e qui ci si avvicina alla prima motivazione); oppure, un invio sempre dall'alto, ma del tutto volontario (o almeno così parrebbe ad una prima lettura dei testi ³⁸).

Dunque la grande prospettiva soteriologica mandea conosce due

35) Per quanto riguarda questi ambiti mi riferisco in modo particolare alla setta degli Yezidi e dei Fedeli di Verità.

36) La sorte che riabiliterà Ptahil alla fine dei tempi è presentata con gli stessi termini con cui si parla della purificazione di tutte le anime nel Giorno Finale. Inoltre un passo del Ginza (PS 477-479) così si esprime: 'Quando finirà il mondo ... Ptahil sarà battezzato e sarà detto il suo (dell'anima) re'.

37) H. Odeberg afferma: 'Ptahil è sia il demiurgo, sia il capo, il rappresentante delle anime cadute' (*Die Mandäische Religionsanschauung*, Upps. Univ. Årsskrift., 1930, p. 14).

38) Drower, ATŠ, p. 188.

movimenti, uno dal basso verso l'alto (richiesta dal basso), uno dall'alto verso il basso (invio dall'alto). I due movimenti, lungi dall'escludersi a vicenda, sono tra loro connessi. Vediamoli più da vicino nelle loro premesse e nelle loro conseguenze.

Il primo movimento, quello dal basso verso l'alto, implicando l'iniziativa del mondo inferiore (e con tale termine designiamo il demiurgo e i Pianeti che lo affiancano nella formazione dell'uomo), fa sì che il cosmo e il corpo umano assumano o connotazioni amorfe di elementi inerti che attendono di essere vivificati, o, più spesso, connotazioni negative: proprio perchè esso, il corpo umano, ha bisogno di essere vivificato, si qualifica come un meccanismo difettoso messo in moto dal demiurgo e dai Pianeti. In questa visione la realtà mondana e corporea riceve ogni possibile accento negativo. I termini con cui gli scritti la designano si accostano, talora, per violenza ed efficacia ³⁹⁾ a quelli più noti (*cellula creatoris*, prigione, tomba + ...) conati dalle altre correnti gnostiche e dalle correnti religiose o di pensiero che potremmo definire come gnosticismo *ante litteram*. Infine, questo primo movimento (dal basso all'alto) ci riporta alla gnosi siro-egizia (cfr., per esempio, l'Ipostasi degli Arconti) e, all'infuori dell'ambito gnostico ma non di quello dualistico, alle dottrine, per esempio, dei Bogomili.

Il secondo movimento, dall'alto verso il basso, implicando l'iniziativa del mondo superiore, si inserisce in una visione in qualche modo 'provvidenzialistica' o almeno non del tutto anticosmica. All'interno di questo secondo movimento, che implica l'invio dell'anima dall'alto, l'involucro corporeo e, per estensione, l'involucro costituito dal cosmo, assumono le connotazioni non del tutto negative, anzi, a mio parere, alquanto positive, di un ricettacolo, di una custodia, ove possa trovare albergo l'anima che scende dall'alto ⁴⁰⁾; i testi esoterici sviluppano una similitudine estremamente interessante: il corpo e il cosmo sono paragonati al bozzolo che il baco da seta si costruisce e in cui trova rifugio e protezione fino al momento di spiccare il volo definitivo in forma di farfalla ⁴¹⁾.

Tuttavia, come si è osservato, gli scritti mandei non sono sempre

³⁹⁾ Il mondo che l'anima lascia al suo dipartirsi è definito talora 'vaso di mescita della morte'.

⁴⁰⁾ In sostanza non sarebbe più il corpo a rovinare l'anima. Ma l'anima in quanto già rovinata trova nel corpo un temporaneo ricettacolo.

⁴¹⁾ Drower, ATŠ, p. 189.

espliciti sul perchè dell'invio dell'anima dall'alto. Possiamo tentare di dare noi una spiegazione: essa ci permetterebbe in primo luogo di confermare che i due movimenti che stiamo esaminando sono in connessione l'uno con l'altro, in secondo luogo di connettere questo duplice movimento riguardante l'anima umana con la tematica di una defettibilità del divino esaminata precedentemente. Pare talvolta che l'anima scenda dall'alto a causa e in conseguenza di un evento colposo avvenuto nel mondo divino (sia esso il difettoso processo creativo del demiurgo o una imprecisata ribellione o incidente o frattura che vede protagonisti esseri divini). Ma talora pare che l'anima debba scendere per compiere una missione, la quale, se in alcuni luoghi è espressamente diretta contro le potenze tenebrose (in modo particolare i Pianeti)⁴², altrove appare inaugurare una situazione nuova (e in un certo senso più ricca) rispetto alla precedente. Mi riferisco a due passi liturgici che così suonano: 'Essa (la Vita) mi chiamò (si tratta dell'anima che parla in prima persona) e mi diede un comando, ed essi (gli *uthras*?) mi rivestirono di un abito di splendore... mi armarono con le loro armi... mi inviarono sulla terra... a fondare una società nella Casa... a preparare un patto per il fedele'⁴³. E ancora: 'Noi, la Grande Vita, facemmo tutti i misteri... e noi liberammo l'anima cosicché essa non dovesse rimanere imprigionata (in un corpo defunto). Quello che noi facemmo uscire da noi tornerà indietro e ritornerà al suo posto ma non sotto quelle specie con cui essa era uscita da noi'⁴⁴.

Infine, il movimento dall'alto al basso ci riporta alla gnosi di tipo iranico (cfr. la vicenda dell'Uomo Primordiale manicheo, inviato nel mondo tenebroso per svuotare della loro potenzialità malefica gli esseri che lì abitavano), e all'infuori dello gnosticismo ma non del dualismo, il mondo iranico (cfr. la discesa provvidenziale ma dolorosa delle Fravashi in questo mondo)⁴⁵.

4. *Ruha*

Le osservazioni riguardanti il duplice movimento soteriologico

42) Ginza PS II, xv, 479, 22-29: "Ein Mana bin ich des grossen Lebens,/... 'Auf! geh zum Hause der Sieben... der nichtigen Rebellen der Finsternis./...'
Tuttavia l'anima non è mandata allo sbaraglio perchè la si istruisce sulle 'opere vane dei Sette'.

43) Drower, CP, p. 138.

44) Drower, ATŠ, p. 188.

45) Cfr. Yašt 13 passim.

presente nel Mandeismo ci hanno portato a notare come nel Mandeismo stesso confluiscono una linea 'iranica' e una linea 'siro-egizia'. Questo fatto può essere verificato anche da un altro punto di vista, e precisamente partendo dalle genealogie che di Ruha danno i testi. Talora essi parlano di Ruha come derivata *originariamente* dall'elemento tenebroso, altrove invece presentano Ruha come derivata, assieme ai Pianeti e ai demoni, dalla voce, o grido, di Ptahil. La prima genealogia risponde ad uno schema 'iranico', la seconda ad uno schema 'siro-egizio'. Tuttavia non è tanto questo che ci preme mettere in rilievo, quanto il fatto che i due schemi non sono fra loro così lontani come potrebbe parere. Si avvicinano in forza di quel rapporto che nel secondo di essi lega il demiurgo a Ruha: tale rapporto appare essere il rovesciamento di quello che in altro ambito religioso è il rapporto Sophia-demiurgo: mi riferisco all'ambito delle credenze ofitiche, all'interno delle quali compare la figura di Jaldabaoth, il demiurgo che dà vita all'inerte carcassa umana, nonchè quella di Sophia, entità divina periferica e madre del demiurgo. Se le cose stanno veramente così, questo ribaltamento, che porta Ruha ad essere derivazione del demiurgo, ha un duplice risultato: svaluta l'aspetto originario di Ruha (togliendole la primarietà rispetto al demiurgo) ma insieme ne conferma la funzione antipodica rispetto alla Prima Vita (funzione che invece Sophia non conosce o conosce in misura diversa): d'altra parte, proiettata violentemente verso il basso, la Ruha 'scaturigine' di Ptahil finisce con l'identificarsi con la Ruha 'scaturigine' delle tenebre.

Ma in che misura ci è lecito assimilare la Ruha mandea alla Sophia della speculazione valentiniana? In favore di questo avvicinamento si pronuncia un testo a carattere liturgico, ove Ruha viene presentata nell'atteggiamento di una entità decaduta la quale lamenta la sua angosciata situazione di lontananza dal divino (cui si rivolge chiamandolo Padre) e di impossibilità di raggiungerlo: 'Ruha alzò la sua voce / gridò e disse: Padre mio, Padre mio / perchè mi hai creato? Mio Dio, mio Dio, / mio Allah, perchè mi hai gettato lontano / mi hai tagliato fuori e lasciato nelle profondità della terra / e nelle basse oscurità delle tenebre / cosicchè io non ho la forza di risorgere a te?' ⁴⁶⁾ Vero è che il testo può far pensare, a proposito del grido che sale dal basso, sia al personaggio mitologico Ruha, sia allo spirito umano *ruha*.

46) Drower, CP, p. 74.

Prima di parlare più diffusamente di quest'ultimo, ci resta da dire, riguardo al frammento liturgico sopra riferito, che esso, se è possibile riferirlo con sicurezza a Ruha, cosa che ci pare di poter fare, date soprattutto certe caratteristiche formali del testo, sembra confermare che l'intuizione di eventi tragici e malaugurati, accaduti all'interno del mondo divino, sia una delle punte di diamante del sentire mandeo. Inoltre il medesimo testo, accanto ad altri di tono analogo⁴⁷⁾, ci sembra esprimere una posizione estremamente ambigua: da un lato il lamento che esseri di carattere infernale alzano al mondo superiore ci pare un tentativo di superare la frattura dualistica; dall'altro, nel momento stesso in cui questi esseri deplorano tale frattura, concorrono, dato la loro propria natura essenzialmente negativa, a sottolinearla.

5. *ruha, lo spirito*

E' ora il momento di analizzare *ruha* come spirito e il suo rapporto con il personaggio mitologico Ruha, la signora delle tenebre.

Costituisce *ruha* la componente inferiore della personalità umana, oppure lo spirito vitale che è nell'uomo⁴⁸⁾. Riguardo all'origine o provenienza di *ruha* i testi non sono del tutto espliciti: talora sembra che *ruha* si formi all'interno del corpo dell'uomo, al momento in cui l'anima prende possesso dell'altrimenti inerte carcassa umana⁴⁹⁾.

Riguardo poi alla sua sorte, i testi affermano che *ruha* esce dal corpo al momento della morte assieme all'anima, compie quindi un cammino di purificazione attraverso i *matarata*⁵⁰⁾, per ricongiungersi infine con l'anima⁵¹⁾. A facilitare il ricongiungimento di *ruha* all'anima tendono alcuni atti cultuali relativi alle cerimonie funebri (*masiqta* e *laufa*). Questo è almeno quanto riferiscono i testi esoterici della setta (ad esempio l'Alf Trisar Šuialia⁵²⁾).

47) CP p. 145: 'I hear the voice of the Seven/ As thy mutter and whisper and say:/ Blessed is it (the soul) that the poor one/ hat a father, and the fruit-tree one who tendeth it/ For use there is no father, our fruit-tree hat none/ to tend it.

48) Cfr. Drower, *The Secret Adam*, A study of Nasoraean Gnosis, Oxford 1960, p. 46.

49) "Quando il corpo fu formato, un'anima fu formata, e quando l'anima prese posto nel corpo, il corpo formò lo spirito vitale" (ATŠ, p. 164).

50) ATŠ, p. 15.

51) "E lo spirito di N. andò e divenne della stessa natura dell'anima e fu stabilito nella Casa della Vita" (CP p. 44).

52) ATŠ, pp. 118 sg.

Senza inoltrarci nella difficile questione sui rapporti fra esoterismo ed exoterismo mandei, ci pare estremamente importante che un elemento di natura 'inferiore' come è *ruha* (anche se i testi esoterici tentano di attenuarne la negatività) trovi posto nella vita culturale mandea; o che vi sia una vita culturale mandea intesa, almeno in alcuni suoi momenti, a salvaguardare un elemento 'inferiore' come è appunto *ruha*.

Per quanto riguarda poi il rapporto che lega *ruha* come 'spirito' a Ruha come personaggio, ci pare che la questione sia un poco più complessa e sfumata di quanto non appaia per esempio alla Drower, la quale risolve il problema affermando che Ruha è la personificazione di *ruha* ⁵³). Meglio sarebbe parlare di Ruha come di una ipostasi di *ruha*, a condizione però di non perdere la distinzione dei due concetti. Non va neppure dimenticato che un certo numero di elementi complicano la possibilità di definire in maniera univoca il tipo di rapporto che lega Ruha a *ruha*. Mi riferisco in modo particolare alla diversa sorte che queste due entità conoscono: se per *ruha* si parla di un recupero, o meglio una assoluzione previa purificazione, di Ruha invece si parla generalmente in termini di condanna. Portrebbe avere influito su tale condanna il fatto che ad un certo punto negli scritti mandei Ruha (o meglio Ruha-d-Qudša) viene identificata con lo Spirito anticotestamentario.

Ulteriori difficoltà nel definire il rapporto Ruha-*ruha* intervengono qualora si consideri il tipo di rapporto che lega *ruha* all'anima. Innanzitutto una precisazione di carattere linguistico: vi è uno spostamento di significato nella terminologia mandea rispetto alla più generale terminologia gnostica, nella quale *psychè* è inferiore rispetto al *pneuma*, la scintilla divina nell'uomo; nel Mandeismo invece, l'anima, *nisimta* o *mana*, è la stessa scintilla divina, e lo spirito, *ruha*, le è inferiore.

Questa inversione tra spirito e psiche può essere collegata alla inversione di quello che nello gnosticismo è il rapporto Sophia-demiurgo, rapporto che nel Mandeismo diventa demiurgo-Ruha (cfr. *supra*). Ma l'inferiorità di *ruha* rispetto all'anima viene meno quando si leggono quei passi dei testi esoterici che risolvono il rapporto *ruha*-anima in un più vasto quadro a carattere duale, ove intervengono numerose altre coppie note sì ai testi ufficiali ma reinterpretate in questo contesto in senso gnostico-antropologico; un passo di un testo esoterico così

53) Drower, TSA, p. 45.

suona: 'O uomini eletti ... o fedeli ... guardate, Adamo ed Eva non hanno lasciato i loro corpi, perchè essi sono Spirito e Anima, ed essi sono Ram e Rud ⁵⁴, ... essi sono sole e luna ... sono Giovanni figlio di Zaccaria e sua moglie Anhar' ⁵⁵).

E ancora, il rapporto *ruha*-anima si fa estremamente sfuggente e ambiguo in passi come quello di un inno liturgico del Ginza. In esso, se da un lato i termini 'fratello' e 'sorella' richiamano alla mente quella comunanza di sorte che lega l'anima allo spirito, dall'altro lato, invece, le parole dell'anima che si rifiuta di condurre con sè *ruha* in quanto 'spirito bugiardo' sembrano scavare un abisso fra la scintilla divina e l'elemento spirituale inferiore: 'Lo spirito parlò all'anima: 'Presso la tua Vita, o mia sorella, conducimi con te, quando morirai'. 'Come posso portarti con me, o fratello mio, tu, che sei uno spirito bugiardo?' ⁵⁶).

6. *Dualisma monarchiano e dualismo radicale nei testi mandei. Per una stratigrafia storica delle dottrine mandee relative all'anima e al demiurgo*

In recenti studi sul Mandeismo si accetta l'esistenza, all'interno della storia della religione mandea, di una 'tendenza monistica' ⁵⁷), (o piuttosto monarchiana), per la quale il Brandt pensava ad una influenza persiana (nella dottrina soprattutto del 'Re della Luce'), e la cui idea base è che la creazione del mondo e dell'uomo deve essere fatta risalire direttamente al Re della Luce. La scuola caratterizzata da tale tendenza dovette sempre far fronte ad insegnamenti eterodossi, ma riuscì ad essere la predominante nelle fasi di raccolta e soprattutto di redazione finale dei testi. Come si sia formata e quando sia fiorita questa scuola non è dato sapere con certezza. E' probabile che l'esempio dell'Islam l'abbia incoraggiata, ma non che le abbia dato origine: già prima, infatti, esistevano le collezioni di testi. L'Islam non avrebbe fatto altro che accentuare questa tendenza; al momento del suo ingresso nella 'terra dei due fiumi' esso si trovò davanti comunità già in possesso

54) Coppia che, secondo una tradizione mandea, popolò il mondo dopo che la razza umana era stata distrutta.

55) ATŠ, pp. 170 sg.

56) Ginza, PS, p. 451.

57) K. Rudolph, *Problems of a history of the development of the Mandaean religion*, in: *History of Religions*, 1969, p. 233.

di scritture, e non comunità che cominciassero a darsi in quel momento, incalzate dall'Islam stesso, ad una foga redazionale, la quale, per troppo tempo, fu invocata dagli studiosi a giustificare la contraddittorietà e confusione che spesso regna all'interno dei testi mandei e in modo particolare nel Ginza.

Ora, proprio il Ginza risalirebbe, nelle sue parti più antiche, al 7°-8° sec. d.C., tuttavia conterrebbe materiale differenti età: le parti più arcaiche paiono quelle costituite dalla poesia liturgica del Ginza di sinistra. Questo dato, che non trova in disaccordo gli studiosi, ci pare estremamente importante: esso riguarda appunto la estrema arcaicità degli inni liturgici del Ginza di sinistra, inni dedicati all'ascesa delle anime. Sono gli stessi inni raccolti nel Qolasta. Secondo il Rudolph tale poesia innica, presentando affinità con il primo gnosticismo siriano, risalirebbe ad epoca pre-cristiana. Secondo il Macuch, che ha studiato attentamente i colofoni delle prime parti del Qolasta, quelle dedicate alle cerimonie del battesimo e dell'ascesa delle anime, la collezione dei testi liturgici risalirebbe molto probabilmente, nella forma in cui noi la conosciamo oggi, al 3° sec. d.C.⁵⁸). Questo dato è confermato anche dalle ricerche del Sävle-Söderbergh. Questa arcaicità dei testi liturgici e, cosa più rilevante, questo loro essersi tramessi attraverso i secoli in forma pressochè costante, può essere un dato fondamentale di cui servirsi per dare un minimo di base storica alla ricerca prevalentemente fenomenologica da noi condotta fino a questo punto, e per individuare, se non necessariamente il nucleo originario del Mandeismo, almeno il *leit Motiv* della religiosità mandea.

A proposito degli inni e delle preghiere che accompagnano il rituale, è da notare che proprio essi sono da più parti invocati quando si tratta di dimostrare che i Mandeï siano 'monoteisti' (per la preminenza che nella letterature liturgica ha la Grande Vita, costantemente invocata e nelle parti iniziali e nelle dossologie finali degli inni); e tuttavia sono sempre essi che mettono in luce una costante e tragica linea dualistica. Nella liturgia del battesimo e soprattutto del *masiqta* è

58) R. Macuch, *Anfänge der Mandäer*, in: F. Altheim-R. Stiehl, *Die Araber in der alten Welt*, Berlino 1965, p. 183. L'importanza dei testi liturgici viene riconosciuta dal Rudolph che, dicendosi d'accordo con il Macuch, ricorda come "the oldest liturgical literature, but not the confused and poorly transmitted legends which display an ignorance of Palestinian topography, is able to disclose something about the earlier history and origin of the sect" (*op. cit.*, p. 225).

costante l'eco dell'opera malaugurata del demiurgo, che ha costretto l'anima al soggiorno mondano. E la violenza degli accenni con cui ad esso si riferisce il testo è estremamente sintomatica e non viene annullata nè tantomeno attenuata nelle pagine ove si parla del demiurgo con accennni genericamente positivi (a lui si alzano lodi al pari di altri esseri della luce). Questo è uno dei sentimenti che ci paiono più radicati nei testi liturgici. Un altro è costituito dalla costante avversione all'anima dei Pianeti, dei demoni e di Ruha, in questa vita e ancor più dopo la morte.

Sulla base delle indicazioni cronologiche date ora, ci pare che, tra i due movimenti che conosce la prospettiva soteriologica mandea (quello di richiesta dell'anima dal basso e quello di invio dell'anima dall'alto), il più costante e profondo sia il primo. Il secondo invece, che trova appoggio soprattutto nei testi esoterici, è periferico. A nostro avviso gli ambiti esoterici, come quelli magici, non possono essere immediatamente invocati quali testimonianze interne di una linea di sviluppo della religiosità mandea. Per l'esoterismo in particolare: il Rudolph sotto-linea come la cura della letteratura sacra mandea fosse venuta sempre più nelle mani di una selezionata classe sacerdotale, che contribuì ad accentuare la distinzione che la separava dai laici, scrisse testi ad uso esclusivamente dei suoi membri ed elaborò una dottrina estranea all'antico Mandeismo⁵⁹). Questo fatto ci impedisce di inserire l'esoterismo in una linea di evoluzione, quale punto di approdo oppure punto di partenza (come parrebbe suggerire la cronologia che abbozza lo Hartman per i testi mandei, collocando i testi esoterici fra le prime opere risalenti ad un periodo pre-islamico). Siamo propensi a vedere l'esoterismo come un elemento a lato, per così dire, di una evoluzione religiosa. Fatto, questo, apparentemente paradossale, perchè niente affatto a lato è la posizione della classe sacerdotale mandea; ma neppure centralissima ed esclusiva.

Tale complessa posizione della classe sacerdotale è riscontrabile anche nel campo della magia, la quale, pur essendo produzione prettamente sacerdotale, è tuttavia condannata ufficialmente.

Abbandonando per il momento gli ambiti esoterico e magico e tornando a quello liturgico, osserviamo in questo la presenza di una tinta tragicamente dualistica: è in esso che si sottolinea l'angoscia che *ruha*,

59) Rudolph, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

o Ruha, prova nella impossibilità di salire verso l'alto. E' ancora nei testi liturgici che l'anima si rifiuta di portare con sè *ruha*.

La vicenda dell'anima che, scesa malauguratamente verso il basso, aspira a ritornare alle sue sedi, ci pare dunque essere il cuore del sentire mandeo, e lontano da esso ci paiono quelle complesse eziologie mitiche sull'origine del mondo delle tenebre, quei motivi polemici che trovano modo di esprimersi soprattutto nel Ginza di destra. Alludo, per esempio, alla decisa condanna dell'ascetismo e dell'astensione dal matrimonio. Ma tale condanna fino a che punto è dettata appunto dall'accesa polemica mandea contro il giudaismo e il cristianesimo, e fino a che punto si aggancia, eventualmente, alla linea 'provvidenzialistica' del Mandeismo, la quale vedrebbe il corpo appunto come necessario e provvidenziale ricettacolo per l'anima? Problemi estremamente complessi.

7. *Gli ambiti esoterico e magico*

Proseguendo ora nel tentativo di abbozzare una stratigrafia storico-tipologica all'interno della letteratura mandea, eventualmente in riferimento alle figure che ci hanno maggiormente interessato nelle pagine precedenti, vale a dire Ptahil e Ruha, prendiamo in considerazione altri motivi, altre indicazioni utili per fissare una pur non certissima cronologia. Ritorniamo agli ambiti esoterico e magico. Per quanto riguarda quello esoterico, il testo più esteso è l'Alf Trisar Šuialia: questo, d'altra parte, come molti testi mandei, non è una composizione unica, bensì una miscellanea, comprendente vari scritti o frammenti radunati sotto il titolo di uno dei testi incorporati. E' opinione della Dower ⁶⁰⁾ che i testi liturgici (*niania*) siano per interna evidenza più antichi di questi testi esoterici, già da lungo però esistenti in forma scritta prima di essere radunati pressappoco nello stesso periodo e dagli stessi 'redattori' cui si deve la raccolta dei testi liturgici (redattori che la Dower, ma non solo lei, identifica nelle persone del sacerdote Ramuiia e dei suoi collaboratori, attivi probabilmente nei primi anni della conquista araba). 'The Alf Trisar Šuialia is of later authorship than the liturgy; more than this is impossible to conclude' ⁶¹⁾ osserva la Dower, e noi, nel prendere atto delle sue

60) ATŠ, p. 103.

61) Vedi la nota precedente.

conclusioni, le allarghiamo in direzione, per così dire, fenomenologica: dunque un esoterismo non solo a lato dei testi 'ufficiali' e sempre più specializzato rispetto ad essi, ma anche ad essi posteriore. E allora, senza volere generalizzare arbitrariamente, ma cogliendo quello che appare un poco il sentore di tutto un testo, sarà possibile vedere a lato e posteriore rispetto ai testi liturgici una fascia generalmente 'procosmica' cui danno corpo i testi esoterici e, in modo particolare, l'Alf Trisar Šuialia, che stiamo più da vicino considerando; una fascia di ispirazione in cui tacciono i violenti accenni alla malaugurata attività del demiurgo e prende forma contemporaneamente l'immagine del corpo-bozzolo (cfr. p. 14); in cui, ancora, la storia dell'anima divina è connessa e 'solidale' con la figura di Ptahil. C'è una notevole differenza di accenti fra questo Ptahil che compare in ambito esoterico e in riferimento al quale si dice che 'l'anima (siamo all'interno della similitudine fra l'anima e il baco da seta) crebbe e divenne forte di fronte al trono di Ptahil' ⁶²) e il Ptahil di cui nel Ginza si dice che dette luogo con il suo 'grido' alla 'formazione della tenebra', ove notiamo la gravidanza di quel 'grido', ricordando che il 'gridare' è tipico di esseri demoniaci ed è dunque singolare il vederlo usato per un essere come Ptahil, che appartiene pur sempre alla linea divina.

Alcune osservazioni, ora, in riferimento all'ambito magico, che del resto poco ci ha interessato nelle caratterizzazioni di esseri come Ptahil e Ruha, ma che riveste un suo interesse specifico per quanto riguarda le figure dei Pianeti, i quali vengono generalmente invocati all'interno dei testi magici. Ora, quelli magici sono i testi più antichi fra le testimonianze scritte mandee giunte fino a noi; ma non necessariamente si conclude da questo che contengano il nucleo di credenze più antico; del resto i più antichi testi magici 'reveal the amalgamation of contributions from many cultures. The Mesopotamian element is prominent' ⁶³).

Posteriori ai testi magici paiono essere i filatteri (*qmahi*), all'interno dei quali si nota una 'divaricazione': infatti vi sono dei filatteri ortodossi (così almeno li definisce la Drower che ne ha curato la traduzione) e i non-ortodossi ('che invocano i pianeti la cui adorazione è condannata nei libri sacri'). Sempre secondo le osservazioni della

⁶²) ATŠ, p. 188.

⁶³) E. M. Yamauchi, *The present Status of Mandaean Studies*, in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 1966, p. 94.

Drower ⁶⁴), i primi non sono nè diffusi nè molto conosciuti, invece i secondi sono più popolari 'for magic is conservative and old and proved formulae are preferred to orthodox religious phrases' ⁶⁵). Meriterebbe di essere più diffusamente studiata questa fortuna di testi che si esprimono in modo abnorme rispetto ai testi 'ufficiali'.

8. *La letteratura liturgica e dottrinale*

Congedati gli ambiti esoterico e magico, torniamo a quello della letteratura liturgica, nonchè di quella dottrinale, per intenderci quella rappresentata principalmente dal Ginza e da manoscritti commentati da parti figurate quali il Diwan Abatur. Se consideriamo le diverse modalità con cui viene presentato il ritorno dell'anima verso la sua celeste dimora, nelle preghiere che accompagnano il *masiqta* e nel testo del Diwan Abatur, notiamo che nelle prime è più che mai presente l'eco della concezione gnostica del difficile passaggio post-mortem dell'anima attraverso le sfere planetarie; invece nel secondo, nel Diwan Abatur, la geografia oltremondana viene ulteriormente complicata con la presenza sì di stazioni planetarie governate appunto dai Pianeti, ma anche di altre governate da figure tipicamente mandee quali Ptahil e i suoi figli. Inoltre nel Diwan Abatur interviene una precisa e complicata casistica di peccati e di relative punizioni, non contemplata nella letteratura liturgica.

Vero è che a questo punto possono e devono intervenire considerazioni riguardanti il diverso genere letterario dei due tipi di testi, nonchè il loro diverso interesse e la loro diversa utilizzazione. Ma esse non dovrebbero togliere valore all'impressione di un nucleo di pensiero di sapore prettamente gnostico presente nella letteratura liturgica e poi rivestito di specificazioni, ampliamenti, dettagli, in testi più tardi rispetto alle più antiche parti della liturgia, testi come appunto il Diwan Abatur.

Così, posteriore e a lato delle più comuni caratterizzazioni che fanno di Ptahil l'essere che in vario modo ha causato la presenza della scintilla divina in un corpo, ci pare essere quella caratterizzazione di Ptahil che è propria del Diwan Abatur, e che fa di Ptahil l'essere che ha istituito il cammino ascensionale dell'anima dopo la morte

64) Drower, *A Mandacan Phylactery*, in: Iraq V, 1938, p. 31.

65) Vedi la nota precedente.

nonchè le modalità di tale cammino 'purificatorio' e 'punitivo' nel contempo.

Certamente un tentativo di fondare su basi storiche l'analisi da noi condotta si scontra, come si è visto, con la difficoltà di stabilire una precisa datazione di tutti i testi mandei. D'altra parte, alcune acquisizioni paiono ormai certe. Una recente nota, molto sintetica, sul Mandeismo (ad essa si è già fatto riferimento) abbozza questa cronologia ⁶⁶): al periodo pre-islamico apparterebbero il Qolasta, l'Alf Trisar Šuialia, il Diwan Abatur ed altri commentari sacerdotali. Agli inizi del periodo islamico invece risalirebbero il Ginza, il Libro di Giovanni, l'Haran Gawaita, l'Asfar Malwasa. Tuttavia, come già si è accennato, si ammette che il nucleo degli scritti di questo secondo gruppo sia più antico del resto (è noto che i testi religiosi mandei sono giunti a noi attraverso manoscritti medioevali che contengono materiale risalente ad epoche diverse). Caso limite può essere ad esempio l'Asfar Malwasa: la mescolanza di parole arabe e persiane fa pensare che il testo sia di età molto tarda, ma d'altra parte alcuni frammenti appaiono essere traduzioni di traduzioni e si riferiscono a fonti di considerevole arcaicità.

Dati più precisi sono riferiti dal Rudolph ⁶⁷): di alcuni trattati del Ginza di destra si potrebbe stabilire una datazione abbastanza sicura; per es. il IX libro risalirebbe al 7°-8° sec. e il XVIII libro al 7° sec.; e il Sävë-Söderbergh ⁶⁸): '... If we find a parallel between a Mandaean text and a Psalm of Thomas ... we have strong reason to assert ... that the text in question is of Mandaean origin and belongs to a stratum in the Mandaean books to be dated before the last quarter of the third century'.

Come è noto, una delle difficoltà più grandi che si incontrano nello studio del Mandeismo è il poter discernere una linea dottrinale coerente al di là delle varie versioni che caratterizzano i miti mandei. Si è giunti anche a negare che il Mandeismo possa essere caratterizzato da una propria e individuabile ispirazione, per non consistere in altro che in un accostamento di brandelli di tradizioni diverse

66) S. Hartman, *Der Mandäismus*, in: *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, vol. III, Göttingen 1975, p. 312.

67) *Die Religion der Mandäer*, in: *Die Religionen Altsyriens, Altarabiens und der Mandäer*, Stuttgart 1970, p. 414.

68) *Studies of a Manichaean Psalm Book*, Uppsala 1949, p. 162.

malamente messe una accanto all'altra. Da più parti si pensò poi di trovare un filo conduttore che potesse cucire assieme i vari frammenti dottrinali e lo si vide in 'un ininterrotto, progressivo sviluppo... dal politeismo verso il monoteismo' ⁶⁹). Non ci pare che una linea così univoca possa spiegare le varie sfumature del sentire mandeo. Ricordiamo quanto si è già accennato a proposito dei testi magici, caratterizzati da due tendenze, una ortodossa e una eterodossa, e costituenti una testimonianza di una incerta convivenza di cosmismo e anti-cosmismo, tutto ciò nel quasi totale silenzio sulla sfortunata attività del demiurgo. Il Ginza, poi, al pari di altri testi, si era propensi a ritenerlo fino a non molto tempo fa esito di una foga redazionale motivata dal bisogno di opporre testi autorevoli all'avanzata dell'Islam. Oggi questa ipotesi trova meno credito, mentre sempre più proficuo appare lo studio in profondità del Ginza medesimo. Il quale, come si è già accennato, è notevolmente caratterizzato, come il libro di Giovanni, da tardi accenni polemici verso altri ambiti religiosi (attribuzione delle grandi religioni storiche ai numi planetari, incontro-scontro sul Giordano fra il Battista e il Cristo, ecc.).

Orbene, proprio questo testo mi pare lontano da accenti 'provvidenzialistici' e caratterizzato nel contempo da un incalzare di toni che contribuiscono ad accentuare sempre più la frattura fra il 'sopra' e il 'sotto', fra il mondo divino e il mondo fenomenico dove si è infossata in seguito a malaugurati eventi la scintilla divina. E questo sentimento che spira dal Ginza ci riporta alle parti liturgiche più antiche, scavalcando gli ambiti dell'esoterismo e della magia. Intravediamo dunque un costante filone dualistico che percorre come vena sotterranea la letteratura mandea e che, lungi dal risolversi, via via acquista una drammatica accentuazione e un inasprimento.

69) S. A. Pallis, *Mandaean Studies*, Londra 1926, p. 5.

NICHIRIN'S THREE SECRETS

by

PAUL O. INGRAM

Tacoma, Washington U. S. A.

One of the most interesting, and yet little understood figures in the history of Japanese Buddhism is Nichiren (1222-1282), the founder of a unique Buddhist tradition which bears his name (Nichiren Shū). Perhaps the most charismatic personality in the history of Japanese religions, he has been labeled everything from "prophet"¹⁾ and "true Buddha"²⁾ to "personal and tribal egotist"³⁾. However, since his teachings and personality have in our century spawned the largest, most powerfully influential, and dynamic religious mass movement in contemporary Japanese history, the Value Creation Society of the Orthodox School of Nichiren Buddhism (*nichiren shōshū sōka gakkai*), it would appear that Nichiren's life and thought should be reassessed. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to join with interested scholars in this enterprise by focusing attention upon Nichiren's abridgment and simplification of traditional Buddhist doctrine and practice in terms of his "Three Great Secret Laws" (*sandai hihō*).

The Context of Nichiren's Teachings

Even though it is true for all religious teachers, and especially

1) Cf. Masaharu Anesaki, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1916), pp. 3-11.

2) The "theological" position of Nichiren Shōshū Sōka Gakkai. Cf. H. Neill Mc Farland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), pp. 194-202 and Kiyooki Murata, *Japan's New Buddhism, An Objective Account of Soka Gakkai* (New York: Weatherhill, 1971), chapters 5-6.

3) Perhaps Edward Conze's evaluation of Nichiren is typical of those which are most negative: "Nichiren suffered from self-assertiveness and bad temper. and he manifested a degree of personal and tribal egoism which disqualify him as a Buddhist teacher". *Buddhism, Its Essence and Development* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 206. James B. Pratt was a little less negative in his comment that, "In positive philosophical insight, Nichiren had little to contribute". *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), p. 646.

Nichiren, that their lives and what they taught cannot be considered separately, we shall not attempt a biography of Nichiren here. This has already been done, and in fact, more is probably known about Nichiren's biography than any other pre-modern Japanese Buddhist teacher⁴). We shall, however, make references to his life experiences as these are involved in the development of his Three Great Secret Laws. In this regard, three important facts must be kept in mind from the beginning.

First, the time in which Nichiren lived and taught (that era of the Kamakura Period known as the Hōjō Regency, 1219-1333) was a time of tremendous social, political, economic, moral, military, and religious upheaval. In his *Risshō Ankoku Ron* (*Discourse on the Establishment of the True Teachings for the Security of the Country*), written and presented to the Hōjō government on August 24, 1260, Nichiren described the conditions of the times as follows:

We have seen many signs in heaven and earth; famine, plague, and the whole country filled with misery. Horses and cows are dying on the roads, and so are men, and there is no one to bury them. Half of the population has been stricken, and there is no household that has escaped.

Therefore, many minds are turning towards religious teachings. Some say, "A sharp sword is the name of Amida", and turn in prayer to the Lord of the Western Land. Others take up magical formulas and charms as protection against disease which belong to the Lord of the Eastern Quarter... Others, again in accordance with the secret teachings of Shingon, use many sprinklings of water from the five vases. Then again, some enter into ecstatic meditation and with a calm mind meditate upon the truth free from all care. Some write the names of the seven gods of luck on pieces of paper and place them on the door posts of their houses, while others do the same with images of the Five Great Powerful Ones and the various (Shintō) deities of heaven and earth... But let men do as they will, famine and plague rage; there are beggars everywhere, and unburied corpses line the roads⁵).

4) The following works are among the most important: Anesaki Masaharu, *Hokke-kyō gyōja Nichiren* [*Nichiren, the Practitioner of the Lotus Sutra*] (Tōkyō: 1933); Masutani Fumio, *Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren* (Tōkyō: 1956); Yamakawa Chiō, *Hokke shisō shijō no Nichiren Shōnin* [*Saint Nichiren in the History of Lotus Ideologies*] (Tōkyō: 1936); Anesaki, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet*; and George B. Sansom, "Nichiren", in Sir Charles Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1934), pp. 416-431.

5) *Nichiren Shōnin Zenshū* [*The Complete Works of Nichiren Shōnin*], 3 vols. (Tōkyō: Nichiren Shū Zensho Shuppansō, 1911), pp. 1-2, hereafter abbreviated NSZ. All translations of Nichiren's works cited in this essay are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Everything that Nichiren taught was directed to not only helping persons caught up in the conditions of this age experience a sense of hope for salvation, but also towards reforming the entire nation socially and politically so that Japan itself could be transformed into a Buddha Land. He was a political and religious reformer who traced the causes of the terrible sufferings of the times to immoral political leadership and a lack of religious unity throughout the country. He thus sought to convince the secular authorities to impose his interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* ⁶⁾ upon the land as the religion of the state, at the same time calling for governmental suppression of all other forms of Buddhism and Shintō ⁷⁾.

Secondly, the fundamental presupposition behind everything Nichiren taught and wrote is a cyclic theory of history centering upon the notion of *mappō* ("latter days of the law"), the last of three periods of gradual decay of Śākyamuni Buddha's Dharma. At the same time, it must also be noted that this theory of history was the starting point for the teachings of other twelfth and thirteenth century Buddhist reformers as well, especially the leaders of the Japanese Pure Land movement, Hōnen and Shinran. Variations of this theory were also

6) The *Lotus Sūtra* (Sanskrit, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*), known as *Myōhō renge kyō* in Japanese, was first translated into Chinese by Dharmaraska during the Western Tsin Dynasty (265-316), and was again translated by Kumarajiva in 407. Nichiren preferred Kumarajiva's translation and interpreted it according to Tendai exegesis. For an old, but reliable English translation of the Sanskrit text, see H. Kern (trans.), *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka* (vol. 21 of *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Müller, 50 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1898). The most recent revised English translation of Kumarajiva's Chinese text is Bunnō Katō (trans.), *Myōhō Renge Kyō: The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law*, rev. by W. E. Soothill and Wilhelm Schiffer (Tōkyō: Kōsei Publishing Company, 1971). All references to the *Lotus Sūtra* cited in this essay are from Sakamoto Yukio and Iwamoto Yutaka (eds.), *Hokke-kyō*, 3 vols. (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1962-76). This edition of the sutra is particularly valuable because it consists of two texts of the sutra: a translation from Sanskrit into Japanese by Iwamoto and a translation from Kumarajiva's text into Japanese by Sakamoto, which are printed on facing pages for contrast and comparison. Kumarajiva's Chinese text is printed on the top half of the pages on which the Japanese translations are printed.

7) See the entire text of *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, NSZ, pp. 1-25. Arthur Lloyd has translated the complete text of this discourse in his *The Creed of Half Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1912), pp. 307-328. In *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, Nichiren was especially critical of the Pure Land teachings of Hōnen (1133-1212). However, throughout his voluminous writings, he also bitterly attacked the Shingon, Zen, and Ritsu schools.

assumed by the Japanese people in general because the contemporary political and social conditions of the time seemed to be its empirical justification⁸). Although the theory of *mapṭṭō* is found in several Mahāyāna sūtras, and therefore there are several versions of it, Nichiren seems to have based his interpretation of it upon a collection of Mahāyāna texts called the *Daijikyō* (*Great Collection of Sutras*)⁹).

The three-fold scheme of periodization as Nichiren interpreted it is as follows (we shall only use the Japanese names)¹⁰): the first period, called *shōbō*, is the period of "correct doctrine", and it lasted, counting from the date of Gautama the Buddha's death, for one thousand years; the second period, *zōbō*, the period of "counterfit doctrine", lasted for the next one thousand years; and *mapṭṭō*, the period of final termination and decay of the effectiveness of Śākyamuni's teachings, lasting for the next ten thousand years. Connected with this conception of the gradual breakdown of the effectiveness of Śākyamuni's teachings is the theory that the Buddha invented various methods of teaching appropriate to the capacities and abilities of persons living in each of these three ages. Consequently, what is appropriate discipline and practice for persons living in one age will not be appropriate for persons living in the other two ages. This idea, called *upāya* ("skill in means"), is especially set forth in the *Lotus Sutra*¹¹), the text which Nichiren believed contained the only teachings suitable to the capacities of corrupted beings living in the age of *mapṭṭō*. Since according to traditional Chinese and Japanese calculations, the Buddha died in 949 B.C., the beginning of the age of *zōbō* was dated 51 B.C., and the beginning of the age of *mapṭṭō* was dated 1051 A.D., precisely the time in Japanese history which marked

8) Cf. Watanabe Shōko, *Nihon no Bukkyō* [*Japanese Buddhism*] (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shinsō, 1964), pp. 64-140 and Akamatsu Shinshu, *Kamakura Bukkyō no Kenkyū* [*Studies in Kamakura Buddhism*] (Kyōto: Byōrakuji Shoten, 1957), pp. 1-10.

9) Chinese, *Ta-chi-ching*, a sixty-fascicle Mahāyāna sutra collection whose full title is *Daihōdō Dijikyō* (Chinese, *Ta-fang-têng-ta-chi-ching*). The sutras collected in the *Daijikyō* were first brought together under this title in the Korean edition of the Mahāyāna Canon. Cf. Ui Hakuji (ed.), *Bukkyō Jiten* [*Buddhist Dictionary*] (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1965), p. 696.

10) The Sanskrit names for these three periods are *saddharma*, *pratirūpa-dharma*, and *paschimadharmā* respectively.

11) See especially chapter two, *hōben* or "expedient method", *Hokkekyō*, vol. 1, pp. 66-133.

the beginning of a long series of civil wars over the question of unifying the country under one warrior clan, and which did not end until the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603.

During the age of *shōbō*, monks and lay followers of the Buddha's teachings were able to understand his Dharma, successfully practice it, and with relative ease attain *nirvāṇa*. Human beings lived longer than they do now, and their mental, physical, moral, and spiritual capacities were strong enough to allow them to practice the extremely difficult meditational and ethical disciplines leading to enlightenment. Evil in the form of pride, lust, and greed had not yet begun to dominate the human spirit. But as this age "ran down" to the age of *zōbō*, evil begins to take a firmer grip upon the world, so that human beings become more and more governed by neurotic cravings and desires (*tanha*) over which they have no control. Thus, even though many monks and laypersons practice the correct disciplines, very few understand the Buddha's Dharma and thereby attain enlightenment. Finally, in the age of *mappō*, no correct doctrine is taught, Buddhism exists only in a corrupted state, and no person achieves enlightenment through its practice. In this age, man's mental, physical, moral, and spiritual capacities have been totally corrupted so that he is completely dominated by his egoistic drives and desires. He is thereby caught in a chain of negative karmic effects from which he cannot escape, and is therefore incapable of freeing himself from the ever recurring round of rebirths in the painful realm of samsaric existence. As can be seen, the basic assumption of this view of history is that the age into which one is born *determines* one's capacities and potential, and thereby one's destiny.

Essential to Nichiren's understanding of the theory of *mappō* was his interpretation of chapter fifteen of the *Lotus Sutra*¹²). The message of this chapter, entitled "Springing out of the Earth", is that Śākyamuni Buddha, who is pictured here as the Lord, that is, as absolute Buddhahood who is the "father" of all worlds and future Buddhas, took form as Gautama the historical Buddha so that sentient beings could be led to *nirvāṇa*. Stated in more traditional Buddhist language, Śākyamuni's human form as the historical Buddha (*nirmāṇakāya*) was only a limited manifestation of Śākyamuni as

12) *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 284-322.

dharmakāya (Japanese, *hosshin* or “law body”). Therefore, since the Truth (Śākyamuni) is eternal, the historical person who embodies this truth and teaches it to sentient beings is “eternal”, so that Master and disciple have an original and “primal” kinship. It is for this reason that the “Bodhisattvas springing out of the earth” mentioned in this chapter are Śākyamuni’s “original disciples” whose mission it will be to propogate the *dharma* to all sentient beings during the age of *mappō* by “skillful means”. The particular Bodhisattva who is given charge of this mission is Jōgyō Bosatsu (Sanskrit, *Viśiṣṭacāritra-bodhisattva*), or the “Bodhisattva of Eminent Conduct”. The point to be made here is that Nichiren gradually came to believe that he was an incarnation of Jōgyō Bosatsu, since only he, he believed, was preaching the *Lotus Sutra* as the sole means of salvation in a way suitable to the capacities of beings living in this degenerate age. Nichiren’s first definite statement in this regard is found in a letter addressed to one of his lay followers, Lord Toki, dated shortly after he had arrived on the island of Sado to begin his second exile in 1271.

During the nearly two months since my arrival on the island of Sado, icy winds have been continually blowing, and though some-times the snowfall is interrupted, sunlight is never seen. My body is penetrated by the cold, whereof, as is told concerning the cold hells, there are eight kinds. As I have written you, during the two thousand two hundred years since the Buddha’s death, various masters have appeared in the world and labored to perpetuate the Truth, knowing its purport, and yet adapting it to the needs of the times. The great masters, Tendai and Dengyō, made explicit the purport of the truth . . . and yet they did not propogate it. One who is to fulfill this task shall appear in this country. If so, may not Nichiren be *this man*? The Truth has appeared and omens are already clearly more manifest than ever before ¹³).

The third important point to bear in mind about Nichiren is that from all indications he wanted to restore and reform the Tendai (Chinese, T’ien T’ai) School. In fact, he accepted *in toto* the Tendai conception of *ichinen sanzen*, or the doctrine that the “three thousand

13) I have for the most part followed Anesaki’s translation in *Nichiren, The Buddhist Prophet*, pp. 62-63, emphasis supplied. Also note the following passage in his *Shoji Ichidai Kechimyoku Shō (Treatise on the Heritage of the Sole Great Thing Concerning Life and Death*, written on March 12, 1272: “Will the Bodhisattva Viśiṣṭacāritra appear in the Latter Days of the Law to open wide the gate of truth, or will he not appear? The Sutra tells us he will (appear). Yet, will it surely happen? Will the Bodhisattva appear or not? At any rate, I Nichiren, have accomplished the pioneering work”. *NSZ*, p. 250.

(*sanzen*) realms of existence" are contained in "one thought moment" (*ichinen*). More specifically, it was Saichō's interpretation of this doctrine that provided the metaphysical underpinnings for Nichiren's specific interpretations of the *Lotus Sutra*. Thus, each of the "ten realms of living beings" (*jikkai*)¹⁴) includes the other nine in itself, making a total of one hundred realms of living beings. Each of these one hundred realms possesses "ten factors" (*jūnyoze*)¹⁵), thus increasing the total of the realms of existence to one thousand. In turn, each of these realms are involved in the three conditions of life in phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*): the realms of sentient beings, nonsentient beings, and the five *skandha* ("groups"), making a total of three thousand realms of existence. The main thrust of this doctrine is that all things exist in a state of monistic interdependence, so that "one thought moment" on the part of any sentient being, no matter what the quality of that thought moment may be, involves the entire structure of existence¹⁶).

For the purposes of this study, it is not necessary to offer a more detailed analysis of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, but only to note, as we have already done, that Nichiren appropriated it as the metaphysical justification for everything he taught. Consequently, we shall only be concerned with elaborating Nichiren's use of it in his Three Great Secret Laws¹⁷).

14) That is, hell, the worlds of hungry spirits, animals, *asuras*, human beings, heavenly beings, *arhats*, *pratyekabuddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and Buddhas. See *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* (Tōkyō: Daitō Suppansha, 1965), p. 135.

15) That is, form, nature, substance, power, activity, primary causes, environmental causes, effects, rewards, and retributions, and the totality of the above factors. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

16) Cf. Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1956), pp. 124-141.

17) On the other hand, Nichiren's specific approach to religious and secular matters was more similar to the other schools of Kamakura Buddhism. As Joseph M. Kitagawa has noted, "...he disregarded the validity of the transmission of the charisma of ecclesiastical offices. To him, the transmission of the *Lotus Sutra* was based on a 'spiritual succession' from one charismatic person to the next, even though there might be a long time span between them. Thus Nichiren considered himself, on the one hand, the successor of Śākyamuni-Ch'i [founder of the T'ien T'ai School in China] -Dengyō line, and, on the other, also an incarnation of Viśiṣṭacāritra Bodhisattva... to whom Śākyamuni is said to have entrusted the *Lotus Sutra*". *Religion in Japanese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 120.

The Three Great Secret Laws

From the time of its introduction to Japan, the *Lotus Sutra* has maintained a central place of honor and renown. However, Nichiren's fascination with this text was, and perhaps still is, unparalleled in the history of Japanese Buddhism. Consequently, his Three Great Secret Laws represent his attempt to establish a simplified form of Buddhist doctrine and practice centering upon faith in the *Lotus Sutra* as man's only option for salvation in the age of *mappō*. But a religious teaching must not only be "true," he taught, it must also embody truth in forms suitable to the needs and abilities of those being taught. Therefore, any religious teaching must meet "five principles" (*goko*), a notion which Nichiren appropriated from Tendai the Great's commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*: *kyō* (*sūtra*), *ki* (the readiness of persons to respond to the *sūtra*), *ji* (time), *koku* (country), and *kyōho rufu no sengo* (the sequence in which religious teachings and practices are to be propagated) ¹⁸).

What Nichiren meant was that it is important to judge which of the numerous *sūtras* preached by the Buddha was the supreme and final statement of the *dharma*. Here, Nichiren remained within the Tendai tradition which placed the *Lotus Sutra* at the apex of the Buddhist canon ¹⁹). Yet even the *Lotus Sutra* cannot be taught without regard to the readiness of persons to understand and accept it — hence the second principle (*ki*). According to Nichiren, corrupted persons living in the age of *mappō* need a simplified form of faith in the *Lotus Sutra* as their only means of salvation. The third principle, *ji*, has to do with the correct time for preaching the *sūtra*, which is, of course, the age of *mappō*. Fourth, true Buddhist teaching and practice must be propagated in the correct country (*koku*), and Nichiren believed Japan was the place in which true Buddhist faith would be once and for all established, and from Japan spread throughout the whole world. Finally, anyone trying to propagate Buddhist faith must know

¹⁸) Cf. *Kyōkijikoku Shō* (*Treatise on Doctrine, Method, Time, and Country*, NSZ, pp. 1243-1249.

¹⁹) "One who propagate Buddhist truth, being convinced of the Five Principles, is entitled to become the leader of the Japanese nation. One who knows that the Lotus of Truth is the king of all *sūtras* knows the truth of religion... If there were no one who read the Lotus of Truth, there would be no leader of the nation. If there is no leader, the nation can only be bewildered... and fall into the deepest hells as a result of slandering the truth". *Ibid.*, pp. 1245-1246.

what kind of religion previously prevailed. Thus, in a country where Buddhism had not yet been established, the "provisional" Theravāda tradition might be suitable for propagation. But in the case of Japan, where the Mahāyāna tradition had been established for centuries, faith in the *Lotus Sutra* should be established as the culmination of Buddhist doctrine and practice.

Nichiren offered "three proofs" (*sanshō*) to show that only his teachings fulfilled the conditions of the "five principles" ²⁰). The first "proof" has to do with written language (*monshō*), meaning a doctrine is true if it has documentary support in the sūtra literature. This is why, for example, Nichiren regarded Zen Buddhism as a heretical teaching because of its supposed rejection of written language in general and the sūtras in particular ²¹). The second "proof" is a proof by logic (*rishō*). By this, Nichiren meant that true religion must be logical in its teachings and practices. In the age of *mappō*, a religion must be rigorously based upon an empirical and logical analysis of the human condition, and he believed only his interpretation of the *Lotus Sutra* met this condition. Lastly, there is the "proof of reality" (*genshō*), which Nichiren regarded as the most important proof. By this criteria, he meant that the truth of a religious teaching must be measured by the concrete benefits and results its practice brings to the devotee (a pragmatic theory of truth). Accordingly, since only faith in the *Lotus Sutra* can bring the benefit of salvation in the age of *mappō*, only this religious practice conforms to "reality", meaning the way things "really are" in this degenerate age.

The "five principles" and the "three proofs" provided Nichiren with a rationale for his interpretation of the *Lotus Sutra*, the central elements of which are his Three Great Secret Laws. The first secret law is the law of *daimoku*, or "title", meaning the five Chinese characters of the title of the *Lotus Sutra*, pronounced in Japanese as *myō-hō, ren, ge, kyō*, to which he added *namu*, literally "to take refuge in". The law of *daimoku* is thus the practice of meditatively repeating over and over again the phrase *namu myōhō renge kyō*, "I take refuge in the Lotus of the Wonderful Law Sutra" ²²).

20) *Ibid.*, p. 1247.

21) Anesaki, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

22) Although the Three Great Secret Laws are mentioned elsewhere in his writings, Nichiren's most systematic statement is his *Sandai Hihō Shō* (*Treatise on the Three Great Secret Laws*), *NSZ*, pp. 2610-2615.

Behind the law of *daimoku*, as well as the other two great secret laws, was Nichiren's use of the concept of "Buddha Mind" (*bodhicitta*)²³), again appropriated from the Mahāyāna-Tendai tradition. According to this doctrine, all sentient beings possess the potentiality for becoming actual Buddhas, even in the age *mappō*, because all sentient beings possess "Buddha Mind", which Nichiren located in what Western psychology is apt to call the "unconscious mind". For this reason, enlightenment is latent in all persons. But during the age of *mappō*, the traditional practices of meditation and ethical discipline are not effective in raising the *bodhicitta* to conscious awareness. Only the practice of *daimoku*, in conjunction with the *honzon*, the second great secret law, can accomplish this. In other words, to fervently chant *daimoku* is an act of faith which raises the unconscious *bodhicitta* to conscious awareness, which in turn results in the experience of enlightenment. This is possible because the five words of the Sutra are themselves embodiments of the truth and power of the whole Sutra. That is, on the basis of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, the mere sounds of the title of the Sutra embody the truth and power of the entire text, so that merely meditatively repeating the words of the title creates an "energy" within the devotee which "raises" his unconscious Buddha Mind to conscious awareness, thereby transforming him into an actual Buddha.

However, in spite of Nichiren's special condemnation of Hōnen's *nenbutsu* and Shingon's use of *mantra*, *namu myōhō renge kyō* differs very little in structure from other *mantra*. It in fact functions as a *mantra* as fully as the Tantric *om mane padme hume*. Mantras (*man*, "to think" or "to reflect") are of vedic origin, and were used both as objects of meditation and as magical defenses against calamities²⁴). Both functions occur in Nichiren's *daimoku*. This is clear from the following "word interpretation" of the Title which he wrote in *Hokke Daimoku Shō* (*Treatise on the Sacred Title of the Lotus Sutra*):

23) Japanese, *bodaishin*. The literal meaning of this term is "aspiration to enlightenment" or "mind aspiring to enlightenment". Cf. Ui, Bukkyō Jiten, p. 947.

24) Cf. Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), pp. 9-34 and S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1950), pp. 1-33.

The character *myō* is written as *sad* in Sanskrit, and *miao* in Chinese. It means "being fully endowed", and therefore "perfection". Each character of the *Lotus Sutra* is fully endowed with the blessings of the 69, 384 characters (of the whole text), just as the ocean is composed of drops of water from all the rivers of the world, or just as any wish-granting-jewel, even though as small as a poppy seed, rains down all the treasures of such jewels in the universe²⁵).

In this way, the words of the Title "participate" in, and therefore embody the truth of the entire text.

Question: Even if the heart of the *Lotus Sutra* is not understood, merely by chanting the five or seven characters *namu myōhō renge kyō* once a day, once a year, once every ten years, or even only once in a life time, is it possible to not give in to one's evil *karma* or fall into the four evil paths and attain the stage of universal faith?

Answer: Yes, it is!²⁶).

Hense, the practice of chanting *daimoku* while believing that the *Lotus Sutra* is the key to salvation, even though the devotee may not even be able to read or understand the content of the text. The metaphysical foundation of this notion, as we have already indicated, is the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*. On this basis, Nichiren could say:

Chanting *daimoku* twice is to read the entire *Sutra* twice; one hundred *daimoku*, one hundred times; one thousand *daimoku* one thousand times. Therefore, if you chant *diamoku* without ceasing, you will be continually reading the *Lotus Sutra*... In the age of *mappō* one should embrace and place one's faith in the *Lotus Sutra*... Even though one neither reads nor studies the *Sutra*, its will bring him good fortune²⁷).

Chanted over and over again, *daimoku* becomes, as Harry M. Buck has noted²⁸), incarnate in the *honzon*, the second of the Three Great Secret Laws. Accordingly, *daimoku* and *honzon* complement one another, for chanting *daimoku* places the devotee at the "center" of the *honzon* (*hon*, "origin", "source"; *zon*, "supremacy"). Therefore, as *daimoku* is a verbal embodiment of the entire truth and saving power

25) *NSZ*, pp. 452-453.

26) *Ibid.*, p. 447.

27) *Myoshin Ama Gozen Gohenji (A Letter of Reply to Myoshin Ama)*, dated July 3, 1278, *Ibid.*, pp. 2295-2296.

28) Harry M. Buck, "The Lotus Scripture in the Nichiren Tradition", (unpublished paper delivered at the national meeting of the American Academy of Religion at Atlanta, Georgia, 1971). Professor Buck's paper is included in the section papers *Asian Religions: 1971* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: The American Academy of Religion, 1971), p. 30.

of the *Lotus Sutra*, the *honzon* is a visual embodiment of this same truth and power because it is a calligraphic representation of *daimoku* in *maṇḍala* form, again an extension of the principle of *ichinen sanzen*.

Nichiren enscribed the *honzon* during his second exile on the island of Sado. In fact, he enscribed several versions of it, but all follow the same basic plan. It is an elongated calligraphic rendition of *daimoku* from the top to the bottom of a rectangle followed by Nichiren's signature. Places of honor at the top right and left are filled with the names of Śākyamuni Buddha and Tahō Buddha respectively²⁹). The names of the *deva* kings of the four quarters occupy positions around both sides of the *daimoku*, and the remaining space is filled with the names of notable Bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra*. There are no pictorial representations nor symbols, but only words and names. Therefore, the *honzon* is essentially a merger of *mantra* and *maṇḍala*. This is clear from the following passage:

The august state of the Supreme Being (Svādi-devatā) is this: the Heavenly Shrine is floating in the sky over the Sahā-world (i.e., the abode of mankind) ruled by the Primal Master, the Lord Śākyamuni. In the Shrine is seen the sacred title of the Lotus of Perfect Truth, on either side of which are seated the Buddhas Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna, and also on the sides, at a greater distance, the four Bodhisattva leaders, Viśiṣṭa-cāritra, and others. The Bodhisattvas Manjuśrī and Maitreya are seated further down, as attendants to the former, while innumerable hosts of Bodhisattvas, enlightened by the manifestations of (Śākyamuni), sit around the central group like a great crowd of people looking up towards court nobles surrounding the throne³⁰).

Since the reference of this passage is to the apocalyptic vision of the "heavenly stupa" in chapter fifteen of the *Lotus Sutra*, entitled "Springing out of the Earth", Nichiren was representing this "heavenly stupa" in calligraphic form in his *honzon*.

In a fundamental sense, however, Nichiren's *honzon* is deeply rooted within the Indo-Tibetan tradition of *maṇḍala*. Regarding this

29) *Prabhūtaratna-tathāgata*. In the *Lotus Sutra*, when Śākyamuni expounded the first ten chapters, this Buddha appeared before Śākyamuni in order to praise him.

30) *Kanjin Honzon Shō (Treatise on the True Object of Worship)*, NSZ, pp. 320-321. I have essentially followed Anesaki's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

31) Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom* (W. R. Track, trans., New York: Bolligen Foundation, 1958), p. 219.

tradition, Mircea Eliade has observed that *maṇḍala* may be rendered as “center” or “that which surrounds”³¹), so that the Indo-Tibetan *maṇḍala* was an “outer enclosure of one or more concentric circles which in turn enclose figures of squares cut by transversal lines. These start from the center and reach to the four corners so that the surface is divided into four triangles”³²). Therefore, the function of a *maṇḍala* is to provide a focal point, an *axis mundi* from which and to which the devotee may redirect the disintegrative forces of his life into a unified, integrative “center”³³). In this sense, a *maṇḍala* symbolically represents both the disintegration of the One into the many and the reunification of the many back into the One. The deities symbolized in this way are visualizations of various levels of existence which the one who meditates on the *maṇḍala* realizes to be only psychic manifestations of himself which he must “apprehend and overcome by integrating them into a midpoint”³⁴). In short, the devotee “internalizes” the *maṇḍala* by using it as an object of meditation.

For this reason, even though Nichiren's *maṇḍala* is not cyclic in pattern, its function is fundamentally the same as any *maṇḍala*. It graphically represents the “sacred power” of Śākyamuni as absolute reality, the “disintegration” of this sacred power into specific manifestations (the various historical Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas), and the “reintegration” of sacred power back into itself, since all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are partial manifestations of the absolute reality of Śākyamuni. Consequently, by chanting *daimoku* before the *honzon*, the devotee internalizes this sacred power and is thereby able to reintegrate the forces of fragmentation that are the result of life in the age of *mapṇō* in this “center”. For this reason, uttering *daimoku* while “fixing the mind” meditatively on the *honzon*, believing what the *honzon* symbolizes — that Śākyamuni, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the devotee are one — accomplishes for the devotee what the established schools of Buddhism attempted by the traditional practices of meditation and ethical discipline. As Anesaki has noted, the *honzon* as “the object of worship . . . is to be sought nowhere but in the inner most

32) Gueseppi Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of Maṇḍala* (London: Rider, 1961), p. 39.

33) *Ibid.*

34) Bharati, *op. cit.*, chapter 1.

recesses of every man's nature, because the final aim of worship is the complete realization of Supreme Being (i.e., Śākyamuni) in ourselves" 35).

The last of the Three Great Secret Laws, *kaidan*, was a notion which Nichiren developed towards the end of his life during his final retreat at Mount Minobu. Essentially, a *kaidan* ("precepts platform") is a place for receiving the precepts of Buddhist discipline at the time of the ordination of monks. In Japan, the first *kaidan* was established at Tōdaiji Temple in Nara in 754 in order to guarantee the continuing orthodox "succession" of Buddhist tradition. Later, on Mount Hiei, where Nichiren had studied, a second *kaidan* was established by Saichō exclusively dedicated to the "succession" of the Mahāyāna-Tendai precepts. The *kaidan* as the last of the Three Great Secret Laws is essentially an expression of Nichiren's concern that the "succession" of his teachings be preserved and continued in the future after his death. He thus dreamed of establishing a national center with his own "ordination platform" from which his teachings would emanate throughout the whole world, and for this purpose, he selected his final retreat, Mount Minobu. He died before he could accomplish his dream.

At this juncture, it is interesting to note, as Harry Buck has already explained 36), that the "Three Jewels" of early Buddhism — taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha — are echoed in Nichiren's Three Great Secret Laws. In the age of *mappō*, *daimoku* and *honzon* have replaced Buddha and Dharma because fixing the mind on the sacred title as encribed in the *honzon* leads the devotee to an experience of awakening to his own innate Buddha Nature, while the *honzon* itself becomes equivalent to the Dharma to which he has awakened. *Kaidan* superceeds *saṃgha* ("community") because it is the place for the establishment of a new Buddhist community in the age of *mappō*. Thus, in a treatise dated June 24, 1274 in which Nichiren proclaimed his "three secrets" for the first time, he wrote:

What is the mystery which Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Tendai, and Dengyō have not revealed for more than two thousand years since the Buddha's death? It is nothing else but the *honzon*, the *kaidan*, and the five characters

35) Anesaki, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

36) Buck, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

37) *Hokke Shuyō Shō* (*Treatise on Seizing the Essence of the Lotus*), NSZ, pp. 355-356.

of the *daimoku*, all according to the truth of eternal enlightenment. Behold, tribulation and commotion follow one after another. Indeed, these are all signs of the appearance of the sage Viśiṣṭacāritra and others. They will appear and establish the Three Gateways to the truth of eternal enlightenment [i.e., Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha]. Then throughout the four heavens and the four quarters, the universal truth of the Lotus of Perfect Truth will prevail. Can there be any doubt this? ³⁷⁾

In an important sense, the establishment of the *kaidan* is also an eschatological event which will not only guarantee the "succession" of Nichiren's teachings, but will also be a visible sign of the conversion of the whole to his teachings about the *Lotus Sutra*.

When in a future time, the unity of secular law and Buddhist Dharma is established, and harmony between the two completed, both sovereign and subjects will adhere to the Great Laws. Then the golden age, just as were the ages during the reigns of the sage-kings of old, will be established in these days of degeneration and corruption in the time of *mappō*. Then the establishment of the sacred *kaidan* will be completed by imperial grant and the edict of the dictator at a spot comparable to Vulture Peak. We have only to wait for the coming of this time. The moral law (*kaihō*) will be established in the actual life of man. The *kaidan* will be the seat of all persons of the three countries (e.g., India, China, and Japan), and the whole world will be initiated into the mysteries of confession and expiation. Even the great deities, Brahmā and Indra, will come to the *kaidan* and participate in the initiation ³⁸⁾.

However, the future *kaidan* will not only be a place of ordination, preservation of the teachings, and a concrete symbol of world wide faith in the *Lotus Sutra*. Nichiren also believed that the *kaidan* is in fact *any* place where the devotee receives "in his body" Śākyamuni's Dharma in the form of *daimoku* and *honzon* ³⁹⁾. In this sense, even though externally the *kaidan* is a place which will be physically located at the foot of Mount Minobu, internally the real *kaidan*, like the center of Nichiren's *maṇḍala*, is "located" in the heart of any person at any time who is totally devoted to the practice of *daimoku*.

38) *Sandai Hihō Shō*, *Ibid.*, pp. 2613-2614.

39) "Whenever Nichiren's disciples and followers utter *daimoku*, being united in heart and mind, even in separate existences, like the association of existence between fish and water, there lies the 'heritage of the sole great thing concerning life and death'. This is the essence of what is promulgated by Nichiren. If it should be fulfilled, the great vow of propogating (the truth in the Latter Days of the Law) over the whole world shall have been achieved". *Shoji Ichidaiji Kechimoku Shō*, *Ibid.*, p. 2499.

Concluding Summary

In summary, we have seen that chanting *daimoku* while “centering” oneself in the object of worship, the *honzon*, leads the individual to salvation now in the age of *mappō*. We have also noted that the universal salvation of the world, marked by the completion of the *kaidan*, is an eschatological event of the near future. The question now is what Nichiren meant by “salvation”, and in this regard he taught a message of hope that is quite traditional within the context of Mahāyāna soteriological teachings. That is, he differed from the tradition only in terms of the *method* he taught for achieving salvation in the age of *mappō*, not in terms of the *meaning* of salvation. Specifically, “enlightenment” meant for Nichiren the experience of awakening to the fundamental unity of all things in existence because all things possess Buddha Nature. But in the age of *mappō*, this experience can only be aroused by awakening the “Buddha Mind” latent within our deepest selves to conscious awareness (the function of *daimoku*), as well as by “perceiving” the actual concrete world as the abode of Śākyamuni and filled with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (the function of *honzon*). For this reason, Nichiren could say:

To embrace, read, recite, and take joy in practicing the entire Sutra, consisting of eight volumes and twenty-eight chapters, is “general practice”. To do the same with the *hōben* and *jūyo* chapters⁴⁰⁾ is “outline practice”. To exclusively recite a four-verse phrase, or chant *daimoku* is “essential practice”. Of these practices — general, outline, and essential — *daimoku* is the essential practice⁴¹⁾.

40) Chapter 2, “Expedient Method” and chapter 16, “Duration of the Life of the Tathāgata”.

41) NSZ, p. 450.

SYMBOLISM IN THE VEDAS AND ITS CONCEPTUALISATION

BY

KAREL WERNER

University of Durham, England

Indian tradition, not surprisingly, claims supramundane origin for its holy scriptures, the Vedas. This view has been duly noted by Western scholars, but it has never been given serious consideration. In fact, it has been tacitly dismissed by them and the Vedas have been interpreted mostly from a positivistic standpoint and characterized as a primitive or archaic stage in the development of Indian religious thought. Recent advances in the discipline known as History of Religions (sometimes also called "religious science", in German *Religionswissenschaft*) make such an approach obsolete. Dismissing or ignoring a claim within a religious tradition, like the one made for the Vedas, reveals an implicit conviction of the superiority of the position adopted by the interpreter. Surely, it must be a part of the task of scholarship to interpret, within its conceptual framework, even such a claim in a meaningful way.

In India this claim is of course made in the usual religious way: the Vedas are believed to be the product of direct divine revelation. And on the surface it appears, as L. Renou argued ¹⁾, that this revelation has been very much revered but seldom really followed either in spirit or in letter. But if we realise the complexity of the Vedic message delivered simultaneously on several levels — addressing ordinary people, educated classes like priests and aristocrats and also a spiritually minded minority — through the medium of the language of symbols and myths, our attitude to and understanding of the Vedas will change substantially and we shall see the question of the origin of the Vedas and their destiny in India in a different light from Renou and other scholars.

1) L. Renou, *The Destiny of the Vedas in India*, Delhi 1965.

The crucial point to bear in mind when interpreting the Vedas is the necessity of deciphering the meaning of the symbols and myths which they use, in other words of translating them into the language of our age. And this amounts to what can be called their conceptualisation. The next important point is the need to apply the hitherto neglected or overlooked hermeneutical principle of several levels of interpretation of the Vedas and to deal with them in an appropriate way. This means that whenever a comprehensive treatment of the Vedas is attempted, all levels of interpretation which can be detected have to be taken into account and used distinctly, and when a particular aspect of the Vedic message is dealt with, one has to decide which level of interpretation one is concerned with. It is, at the same time, essential to avoid confusing different levels of interpretation ²⁾).

The aim of this paper is to concentrate on the higher level of interpretation, which can be called spiritual, and to demonstrate with a few selected examples the fact that the Vedic mind reached the highest peak of spiritual achievement, which may have been approximated or reached anew in subsequent epochs of the development of Indian religions, but has hardly been surpassed.

First of all the claim that the Vedas are a divine revelation has to be interpreted on more than one level. On the current religious level it is just a matter of faith, but on the spiritual level of interpretation it represents what the mystics and Yogis describe as personal vision or direct experience of the transcendent. The frase "divine revelation" (*śruti*) is thus a symbolical expression for what in plain conceptual language would be called direct perception of the transcendent ³⁾. If this is so, the Indian tradition has never really digressed from the Vedas, but kept renewing or kept trying to renew the vision of their *ṛṣis* through the spiritual endeavours of its religious leaders, Yogis and mystics, and kept expressing their experiences in ever new idioms,

2) The idea of different levels of interpretation of the Vedic texts is old, having been hinted at already by Yāska (Nirukta 7, 1-2), but it has been generally neglected. In modern times it was used by Dayananda. I have referred to it in my paper on "Problems of Interpretation of Indian Religions" and it has been used by F. R. Allchin in his paper "*Gāyatrī Mantra* and the Beginnings of Indian Theology" both presented during the Cambridge Symposium on Indian Religions (20-23 March 1975) and both still awaiting publication.

3) This is often expressed in the hymns by the word *dhīti*, *vision*. Cf. J. Gonda, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, The Hague 1963.

sometimes remotely echoing the language of the Vedas, sometimes creating new symbolical imagery and mythology.

Turning to the Vedas themselves I would like to present now an example of a symbolical expression of what, on analysis, appears to represent an underlying spiritual or mystical experience of the transcendent; I find it in the very much underestimated and neglected female deity called *Aditi* who despite her “low profile” is referred to in the Vedas as “the perfect goddess” (RV 2, 40, 6), “mother of gods and kings” (RV 1, 113, 19; 2, 27, 7) and who is finally said to be “all that has been and will be born” (RV 1, 89, 6).

No separate hymn is dedicated to *Aditi*, but she occurs in many hymns throughout the Vedas praised and adorned with numerous epithets, although never described as having physical features.

A clue to the interpretation of *Aditi*'s meaning is her name, already explained by Max Müller as “not bound” (*a-dita*), “not limited, absolute, infinite” ⁴⁾. As a noun the word means “unbinding”, “boundlessness” and “freedom” and is used in the latter sense a few times in the Vedas (RV 1, 24, 1; 7, 51, 1) ⁵⁾. As an adjective it means “boundless” or “infinite” and is used about the sky (RV 5, 59, 8; 10, 63, 3). To worshippers *Aditi* is a symbol of freedom from the bondage of sin and guilt (RV 1, 24, 15; 1, 162, 22; 7, 93, 7; 8, 56, 14) and from suffering (RV 8, 18, 6).

A further clue to an understanding of *Aditi* is her motherhood, which is not limited to the gods and other creatures, but is extended to the entire universe in all its dimensions. In other words she stands for the divine source of the whole of manifested reality. And a further, no less important, point is added when she is proclaimed not only father and mother, but also son — which means that she represents manifested reality itself as well as its source. The relevant verse (RV 1, 89, 10) reads as follows:

Aditi is heaven, *Aditi* is inner region, *Aditi* is mother, father and son, *Aditi* is all gods, *Aditi* is five human races, *Aditi* is all that has been born and still is to be born ⁶⁾.

4) F. M. Müller, *The Vedas*, Calcutta 1956 (a collection of papers from different publications, written between 1865-1898).

5) Cf. A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg 1897, p. 121.

6) áditir dyaúr áditir antárikṣam áditir mātā sā pitā sā putráḥ / víśve devá áditih páñca jánā áditir jātām áditir jánitvam // Text according to Th. Aufrecht, *Die Hymnen des Rígveda*, Bonn 1877.

This complexity and depth of *Aditi*, particularly her double nature of mother and offspring, that is the source of life and life itself at the same time, find expression in various other hymns. Thus although she is the mother of all gods, and particularly of a group of seven or eight gods called after her *Ādityas*, one of them, *Dakṣa*, is seen also as her father: "*Dakṣa* was born of *Aditi*, *Aditi* of *Dakṣa*, for *Aditi* was born as your daughter, o *Dakṣa*!" (RV 10, 72, 4-5). She is also found connected with various other mythological images of divine parentage. She is called mother Earth (RV 1, 72, 9; AV 13, 1, 38), she is both Heaven and Earth (RV 4, 55, 1) and often referred to as cow (RV 1, 153, 3; 8, 90, 15; 10, 11, 1) and her milk is *soma*, the sacred drink (RV 9, 96, 15). She has many epithets, such as "divine and foeless" (RV 7, 40, 4), "far-spread and wide-ruling" (RV 8, 56, 12) and "luminous and celestial" (RV 1, 136, 3), some of them clearly pointing to her spiritual significance.

It is indeed quite surprising that previous interpretations of *Aditi* were so inadequate. Not even M. Müller fully recognised her role in the Vedas and was unable to draw logical consequences from his own interpretation of her name. He wrote in 1882:

"*Aditi* means *infinite*, from *dita*, bound, and *a*, not, that is, not bound, not limited, absolute, infinite. *Aditi* itself is now and then involved in the Veda, as the Beyond, as what is beyond the earth and the sky, and the sun and the dawn — a most surprising conception in that early period of religious thought" 7). And in 1891 he commented on her thus:

"*Aditi*, an ancient god or goddess, is in reality the earliest name invented to express the Infinite; not the Infinite as the result of a long process of abstract reasoning, but the visible Infinite, visible, as it were, to the naked eye, the endless expanse beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky. That was called *A-diti*, the un-bound, the un-bounded; one might almost say, but for fear of misunderstandings, the Absolute, for it is derived from *diti*, bond, and the negative particle, and meant therefore originally what is free from bonds of any kind, whether of space or time, free from physical weakness, free from moral guilt. Such a conception became of necessity a being, a person, a god. To us such a name and such a conception seem decidedly

7) Müller, *The Vedas*, p. 116.

modern, and to find in the Veda *Aditi*, the Infinite, as the mother of the principal gods, is certainly, at first sight, startling". And then he proceeded to explain how the "thoughts of primitive humanity" worked and how "the poets of the Veda indulged freely in theogonic speculations" and how *Aditi*, the mother of gods on the one hand and a child of *Dakṣa* and a subordinate deity on the other, was an outcome of these speculations⁸).

M. Müller was still misled by the theory of personification of nature phenomena into disregarding the mystical significance of *Aditi*. The concept of infinity and of the "beyond" of course could not have arisen as a result of abstract reasoning which obviously did not exist at the time, but since the Vedas are primarily records of the religious experience of man at the time of their origin, it is really only a small step to seeing *Aditi* as the expression of man's mystical experience of the "beyond" or of the transcendent. M. Müller, although a "dreamer", as he was called by Oldenberg, could not take that step, believing as he did that the Vedas were "neither beautiful, in our sense of the word, nor very profound"⁹). It was the ruling evolutionary view which required that previous ages be looked upon as incapable of profundity.

Those who labelled M. Müller a "dreamer" were, naturally, still less favourable to *Aditi* than he was. H. Oldenberg wrote: "*Aditi* is a personified concept. Her name means 'not-bound-ness' (Nicht-gebundenheit), we may translate it, more simply, as 'freedom'"¹⁰). And the inclination to ascribe to Vedic authors' minds a high capacity for abstraction rather than to credit them with deeper religious or spiritual experiences was continued for quite some time. Macdonell explained *Aditi* as a personification of an abstract idea, although in face of her undoubted antiquity, proved by her appearance in all books of the Vedas, he did worry about how to account "for so early a personification of such an abstract idea", as personification of abstract ideas fitted properly into the accepted evolutionistic view only if it could be seen as a relatively late development in the Vedas. Macdonell accounted for it finally by inventing an ingenious theory which required him to venture on speculation about the pre-Vedic period. As mentioned

8) Müller, *Vedic Hymns*, Oxford 1891, Part I, pp. 241-2 (SBE XXXII).

9) Müller, *The Vedas*, p. 95.

10) H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, Darmstadt 1970 (1st 1894), pp. 202-3.

earlier, *Aditi*, while being the mother of all gods, had a special group of seven or eight sons called after her *Adityas* and sometimes simply sons of *Aditi* (*aditeḥ putrāḥ*). Macdonell suggested that since *aditi* meant also freedom, the latter expression simply meant, in pre-Vedic times, that these gods were “sons of freedom”, which was to be taken as a figurative epithet. Freedom then was, according to him, duly personified into a divine mother of gods, *Aditi* ¹¹). A. B. Keith agreed with this theory and summarised it, rather dogmatically, thus: “*Aditi* was conjured up from a phrase meaning sons of freedom or rather perhaps guiltlessness”, the last qualifying phrase being his little contribution to the theory ¹²).

This purely conjectural explanation of *Aditi* is a blatant example of shallow conceptualisation of the Vedic imagery which still sometimes haunts the pages of books on the Vedic religion. Thus L. Renou had recently nothing new to say about *Aditi*, referring to Macdonell and Keith when he summarily and brusquely proclaimed: “It is undoubtedly a case of a secondary form, owing its subsistence to the word *Aditya*” ¹³).

J. Gonda, understandably, does not subscribe to this outdated theory and comes a little nearer to the transcendental nature of *Aditi*. He agrees with Oldenberg that she represents and bestows bondage-free existence, but in addition he stresses her nature as “Great Mother” and the way in which she is identified with mother Earth and her mythological equivalent, the cow, and also with the whole universe. He refers to *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (I, 11) where the navel of the earth into which one puts offerings is described as her womb. She stands for him for the ideas of breadth, expanse, boundlessness and freedom and she is also the goddess of *ṛta*, the eternal law ¹⁴). However, Gonda does not venture an interpretation on a deeper level.

A hint pointing in the right direction has been available since the end of the last century in the work of P. Deussen, although his conclusions are inadequate. He commented on the verse translated above

11) Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 122-3.

12) A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Delhi 1970 (1st Harvard 1925), pp. 215-7.

13) Renou, *Vedic India*, Calcutta 1957 (French 1947).

14) J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens I, Veda und älterer Hinduismus*, Stuttgart 1960, pp. 83-4.

(RV 1, 89, 10) by saying that here appeared, still timidly and in a mythological veil, the idea of the unity of the universe and that this was later fully developed in two other hymns (1, 164; 10, 129) which represent to him the core of the philosophy of the *R̥g Veda*¹⁵). This view corresponds to what he saw as the evolution of philosophical thinking from the childish, half-conscious and imaginative activity of the human mind. Being fully influenced by the evolutionistic thinking of his time, Deussen failed to see the depth and overall significance of symbols and of mythology in general and did not suspect any profound experiential value behind them, a trait which he shared with practically all those scholars who in the pursuit of rational explanations of Vedic deities, their meaning and origin, turned a blind eye on their living content — which is their value as representations of man's communication with reality on a deep level.

In my view *Aditi* cannot be understood and explained unless we are prepared to accept that it was mystical experience which lay behind the verses in which she is described and addressed. To regard her as a personification of a concept does not mean anything to us today, it is an empty phrase. To remain content with summarising her mythological features and her significance for the worshipper, as Gonda does, is leaving untapped the dimension of depth behind religious symbols and myths to which, after Otto and Jung, interpreters of religion should be open.

Let us now summarise the clues to *Aditi's* meaning: She represents (1) "boundlessness", "infinity" and "freedom from bondage and suffering", she is (2) the divine mother, that is the transcendental source of the entire manifested reality, past, present and future, and (3) she is the manifested reality itself. In this way she possesses all the attributes which a mystic feels are there when he achieves union with the absolute or with God. Thus *Aditi* represents, in the deepest possible sense, the Vedic seers' conscious experience of the unity of man with reality as a whole in all its multidimensional complexity and also with the source of manifested reality when it rests in its pre-manifest latency. *Aditi* is not just the visible infinity, but as mother she also represents the infinity and boundlessness which precede the limitations

15) P. Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, 1, Allgemeine Einleitung und Philosophie des Veda bis auf die Upanishad's, Leipzig 1920 (1st 1894), p. 105.

imposed on reality by its manifestation in innumerable shapes and forms as separate things and personalities, limitations experienced by mystics as bondage which causes suffering. But being viewed as a goddess, a person, although with elusive features which do not lend themselves to description as other gods do, she does not represent anything like an impersonal precreational chaos, but indicates that reality, even in its pre-manifest latency, is a conscious structural unit, something for which we have no other concept than that of a person. (And that is why God cannot but be conceived by a believer of any religion in terms of a personal creator rather than an impersonal creative force.)

Nevertheless, and in spite of what has just been said, the element of vastness, infinity and, from the standpoint of the manifested world of things and beings, of voidness that is present in the mystical experience of unification leaves a residual impression of impersonality as a basic characteristic of the ruling force behind visible reality. (And man, in his descriptions of his encounters with the transcendent has never fully overcome this dichotomy. If the impersonal aspect of the transcendent is emphasised to the exclusion of its personality element, we get a so-called "atheistic" religion like early Buddhism. But Buddhism has not escaped this dichotomy either, as is shown by the development of Mahāyāna with its *Trikāya* doctrine and its cosmic Buddhology ¹⁶).

So *Aditi* appears to combine in herself both the impersonal and the personal aspect of the transcendent and, short of a mystical union with her, can be approached on lower levels both by a philosophical mind

¹⁶) One can speculate further and point out that in our modern civilisation this dichotomy is present, too. Science has established the concept of impersonal laws of nature and, since Einstein, seems to be aspiring to create a unitary theory of the universe, and yet despite the widespread scientific materialism many people, including individual scientists, find a purely scientific outlook unsatisfactory as a philosophy of life and do believe in a personal God. For a long time the two extreme views — the scientific one which does not accept anything beyond and above material reality governed by inherent natural laws and the religious one relying on a personal God-Creator — were hostile to each other and at present they seem to have reached a certain uneasy mutual tolerance as religion did not succeed in its past endeavours to subjugate science and the optimistic expectation of scientific materialists that with the progress of science religion would go away has not materialised. Some signs seem to indicate now that the attitudes are slowly softening and that a need may be felt for some kind of a get-together of the two.

as the hidden One beyond existence and non-existence and by the worshipper as a mighty goddess who can grant freedom and relief from suffering.

The motherhood of *Aditi* symbolises the mystery of creation and also the experience of the mystic of being an offspring of the infinite, together with the rest of the manifested reality. This is not to be understood as merely a kind of creation or emanation of the world from the transcendent "at the beginning" as it were, but as a constant flow between the unmanifest and the manifest for *Aditi* is the mother of everything that has been and will be born. This again shows the origin of *Aditi* in mystical experience rather than in speculation, for a thinking mind, whether a simple or a sophisticated one, is satisfied with the idea of first cause from which an independent and continuous line of causes and effects then proceeds further. (An extreme example of this kind of religious rationalistic thought was European deism of the eighteenth century). A mystic, however, experiences his total dependence on the divine, he feels that he owes his sustenance directly to God in every single moment of his life and so does the rest of creation in the past, present and future.

The image of *Aditi* being father, mother as well as son, that is not only the source of the manifested reality and, consequently, of all creatures, but at the same time this reality itself and, by implication, every single creature within it, is the expression of the experience of mystical union of the individual mystic with his God or divine source, a recognition, arrived at by non-rational or supra-rational means, of the essential oneness of the transcendent with the manifest as a whole and with every individual part of it. This oneness is the reason why the world is not chaotic but appears to be ruled by the inherent law of balance (*rta*) which is both cosmic (natural law) and individual (moral law). *Aditi* is the queen of this law (AV 7, 6, 2; YV - VS 21, 5). This image also represents a recognition of the possibility for every part of the manifested reality, for every creature, to find its way back into the hidden oneness, to the freedom of the transcendent, as a son returns home to his father and mother. This may be difficult to understand conceptually and to express adequately in rational terms (as we can see from the later texts of the *Avaita Vedānta* system), but the reunion does not take place on the surface of reality with its apparent diversity. It is supposed to happen in depth, in the inner region or

dimension of the individual experience where it meets with the hidden dimension of the universal. This is expressed symbolically by the navel of the earth which, as Gonda mentions, is the womb of *Aditi*, an important hint which shows that the navel of the earth, known also from Greek and other mythologies, is not meant to represent the middle of this earth on its surface, but is the central point, the point of contiguity, at which the unmanifest or the transcendent and the manifest meet. It is the womb from which the universe and its creatures emerge, but it is also a gate through which one can enter the transcendent when the appropriate offering has been made, which is the mental abandonment of the superficial sense of separateness.

Here we have perhaps mankind's oldest known peak achievement in its struggle for knowledge of itself and of its place in the order of reality. It is an achievement which, it has to be stressed again, was not a result of conceptual development, of a speculative approach, but of mystical search and experience which transcends the normal cognitive capacity of man in his everyday life. It was undoubtedly the possession of only a few, but it seems to have been their objective to convey some of it to others. The verbal expression of this insight then had necessarily to take the form which was understood and responded to at that time and that was the form which we now call mythological. In it symbols rather than concepts are the vehicle of communication of uncommon messages. And although not understood fully and consciously, the message of *Aditi* was certainly absorbed and influenced the way of life of ordinary people, for symbols have the power to transmit their message even if they are not understood or noticed by the superficial mind ¹⁷).

Another mythological illustration from the Vedas of the oneness of the world with its source, of the mystic with God, is the god *Varuṇa*, the foremost son of *Aditi*. With his mother he is the lord and guardian of *ṛta*, the law of the manifested universe, both material and spi-

17) This is something which depth psychology has fully established. It is worthwhile to quote Eliade in this context: "The historian of religions is especially grateful to Freud for proving that images and symbols communicate their "messages" even if the conscious mind remains unaware of this fact. The historian is now free to conduct his hermeneutical work upon a symbol without having to ask himself how many individuals in a certain society and at a given historical moment understood all the meanings and implications of that symbol". M. Eliade: *The Quest, History and Meaning in Religion*, Chicago 1969, p. 21.

ritual¹⁸). He represents the manifested cosmos with all its dimensions, including the heavenly ones, which sprang forth from the transcendental source. His name suggests an astonishingly appealing interpretation. The root *vr* means to cover, envelop, surround, encompass, enclose. *Varuṇa*, therefore, means literally “the encompasser”¹⁹), “the coverer”, “the enveloper”. A thing exists only by enclosing, “encompassing” within its surface a section of the infinite and empty universal space. The infinity of space is not thereby abolished and space itself both permeates and surrounds the thing, which is a structure created, we are told nowadays, merely by subatomic particles whirling around in empty space according to precise laws. Similarly one can explain “mental things”. A person or personality is a structure of dynamic forces which we may call character qualities and which “whirl around” within the cosmic element of awareness, the inner or interim dimension of reality (*antarikṣan*, later known as *ālaya vijñāna*), slicing out of it the individual consciousness of a person, all that happening according to the cosmic law, *ṛta*.

A further instance of the Vedic assertion of the essential oneness of the individual with the universal, of the manifested reality with its source, is furnished in a hymn (RV 10, 64) where the seer in mystical experience recognises and claims relationship with the gods and expects that *Aditi* will confirm his brotherhood with them when they all meet with him “at the central point” (verse 13). The “central point”, on the level of external religious worship meaning the sacrificial altar, represents on the level of spiritual experience, like the navel of the earth, the inner point of contiguity where the individual and the universal, the manifest and the transcendent, meet. So when the seer or mystic reaches this heart of reality by the integration of his surface consciousness with the inner region of his own personality, penetrating through all its layers into the centre, he will meet there the forces of cosmic reality (gods) at their source.

It is just this mystical or spiritual experience and knowledge that is the central message and meaning of the Vedas and not merely the sacrificial lore of bargaining with the gods or the magic manipulation of the forces of nature to the advantage of the sacrificer. These latter

18) For references in the RV see Keith or Macdonell.

19) See Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 28.

elements, which were always conspicuously present and which, in later Vedic times, became predominant, are only a secondary, albeit more widely acclaimed, aspect of the Vedic message and belong to the lower level of its interpretation. From the mystical Vedic experience as understood on the spiritual level of interpretation, there is then a direct line to all the subsequent peak achievements in Indian spiritual development which were expressed in different idioms in the Upaniṣads, in early Buddhism, in the Hindu schools, particularly in the system of *Advaita Vedānta*, in the schools of Māhāyāna Buddhism and also in some modern philosophies, such as that of Aurobindo. Only this mystical layer of the Vedas can justify the high reputation which the Vedas have enjoyed throughout the ages, even when the clue to their full interpretation has been lost. But looking at the Vedas in this way enables us to appreciate the struggle of Indian religious and philosophical tradition to reinstate and reformulate that which was most valuable in the Vedas and we may therefore conclude, contrary to Renou's view, that the Indian tradition has not strayed away from the message of the Vedas.

Now every reformulation or translation of the idiom of symbols and myths into rational language is a conceptualisation. It represents the effort of a mind which has not had the spiritual experience underlying the symbols and myths it is struggling to decipher and which has lost entirely or to a substantial degree the capacity to take in their message directly (even if unaware) — which, in other words, is not capable of an emotional or non-rational response to them and is not influenced by them.

This process of rationalisation and conceptualisation of Vedic spiritual achievements had already started in the later Vedic period and it is usually seen by scholars as the beginning of Indian philosophy and, consequently, as a progressive step and a higher achievement. Although the development of conceptual thinking is undoubtedly an important accomplishment in the history of the Indian mind (and of the human mind in general), it does not, in itself, necessarily represent a higher stage in man's understanding of himself and of reality as a whole. In fact, the conceptual approach on its own is often unable to grasp and express living realities effectively and therefore religious and other movements have never renounced the use of symbols, either old ones or newly created ones.

But the process of conceptualisation of the Vedic message which started so early was a certain sign that the old symbolical imagery was already wearing out, and it seems that some of the best brains among the Vedic authors of the late period felt the need to reformulate it. And if they had something to say from their own spiritual experience, the language which they naturally applied was one which is much nearer to our way of thinking, proceeding in deliberations rather than in mythological stories, although it still employs symbols whenever the mind faces an unexplored or uncommon level of experience.

The best example of this late Vedic trend is the celebrated *Nāsadiya* hymn (RV 10, 129), often called the Creation hymn. As can be expected, it is not quite free from symbolical images, but there is no mythological tendency in it. It has been summarised, translated and commented on many times and despite differing opinions on some parts of it, there has been a general consensus that it is an outstanding and unsurpassed specimen of Vedic philosophising. Its reading and translation are not, on the whole, controversial, so I use here, with some corrections, Macdonell's old rendering which was also, not long ago, included in the anthology "The Source Book in Indian Philosophy" ²⁰). As previous comments and interpretations concerning this hymn are not relevant to the aim of this paper, I abstain from summarising them.

The author of this hymn obviously struggled to express his thoughts and insights in rational and descriptive concepts. He used expressions which had symbolical meaning only where concepts just were not available and could not be coined at the time, while a meaningful symbol was ready at hand. The source of the author's ideas does not seem to have been merely reasoning on the basis of existing Vedic material. Some of his verses make the impression of being based on visionary, mystical or Yogic experience put into words which only partly convey the depth of his vision. It is also quite likely that the author knew very well the preceding Vedic tradition and was fully aware of the depth of its message. His primordial dimension of latency beyond the concepts of being and non-being might well have been his under-

20) A. A. Macdonell, *Hymns from the Rigveda*, Calcutta-London (The Heritage of India Series; date not given, but surely after 1918). *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan and Ch. A. Moore, Princeton 1957.

standing and expression of that aspect of *Aditi* which represents the precreational infinity before she gave birth to the universe. He found a conceptual designation for this dimension which he, too, understood to be dynamic and purpose-bent (as the infinite symbolised by a goddess who is the Great Mother of creation certainly is), but he hesitated to call it a person: he chose the neutral expression, That One. That he could not get away from the notion of a highest personal god entirely is shown by his final suggestion that the overseer of the world in the highest heaven might, or might not, be responsible for, or know the mystery of, creation.

Let us now turn to an analysis of the hymn verse by verse. The first verse clearly refers to the precreational situation when this manifested universe of things and beings was not here. It shows the author's understanding of being and non-being as two relative and interdependent notions applicable only within the manifested universe as we know it. Not even space existed, let alone heaven beyond it, that is to say, the spiritual planes of existence. The question is: was there any kind of what we may call latent existence, and, if so, where was it, and what was that mysterious dimension of latency? Was it an entity of a personal character, protecting or sheltering the unmanifest world like a mother her unborn baby (*śarman* has the overtone of close personal shelter)? Was there unfathomable water? This question points to the conceptually inaccessible state of the unmanifest voidness which yet is a fullness, pregnant with the manifoldness of the manifested reality. Water is a symbol for this latency of the cosmos (and therefore for chaos in the original Greek sense) as well as for the unconscious mind.

The second verse indicates that there was no life, no death, no day, no night — in other words, time, like space, was not manifest. Yet there is no suggestion of nothingness, and since manifoldness does not yet exist, the appropriate expression found by the author for the mysterious entity is That One (*tad ekam*). Spaceless, timeless, yet in its own way dynamic and the sole force, this Absolute, first covered by and hidden in the darkness of undifferentiated yet sensitive latency (water), entrapped in voidness, came into existence — as the third verse indicates — by the force of its inherent creative flame (*tapas*).

That One of the second verse and That One of the third verse obviously are not quite one and the same thing, but represent two

different stages or instances of world manifestation or of the interchange between the transcendent and the first evolute or manifestation of it. First we have the latent, premanifest, but dynamic and powerful One that has no other beyond. Then this One comes into manifest being by the force of its inner dynamism or creative flame-power (*tapas*). And from here on the hymn deals only with the manifested reality, namely how from being one it proceeded to the stage of duality. This seems to have been arrived at in two different ways: (1) by the introduction of two correlative and interdependent concepts of existence and non-existence in the fourth verse (which is an elaboration on the first line of verse one) where the duality of being and non-being comes across clearly as the characteristic feature of the manifested reality, and (2) by pointing out the polarity of existence in the fifth verse.

But first the fourth verse brings out the psychological equivalent of the creative flame (*tapas*), that is of the dynamism by whose force the One emerged from latency into existence. It is called desire (*kāma* which means also love), the foremost psychic tendency (*manaso retaḥ*). Then the author proceeds to indicate how the knowledge of these things came about: it was by contemplative absorption, by diving into the depth of their hearts with intelligence (*manīṣa*) that the seers discovered the conditionality of being which is limited by non-being, the first formulation of the impermanence and relativity of existence, limited both in time and space.

The fifth verse then introduces the everpresent quality of manifested reality, namely polarity which is reality's inner dynamism, a kind of dialectical tension which can be found on all its levels — as the principle of physical existence, the driving force of life and the stimulus for thinking and creativity. It seems that this polarity was discovered by the seers in their vision of primeval reality as the first differentiation within the One, or perhaps rather as the inherent quality of its dynamism. This polarity, understood as creative force and fertile power, as energy and impulse, accounts then for the subsequent manifoldness of manifested reality. How this proceeded in detail is of no interest to the author who, as a philosopher, dealt only with first principles.

Having thus finished his metaphysical inquiry into the mystery of the beginning and source of existence, the author pauses in verse

six and looks back at the problem again, with a sober mind. And in a truly intellectual and utterly honest fashion he asks: "Who knows for certain?" The insights which sprang from intuition and the understanding which may have been gained during contemplative absorption seem somehow incomplete or bring no real certainty when put into words. And this would be even more true if the hymn were a philosophical reconstruction of the ancient mythological message of the mystics — of their vision of primordial unmanifest oneness (*Aditi*) that gave birth to the manifested cosmos (*Varuṇa*) and to everything in it.

The questions and doubts continue throughout verses six and seven. But the doubts and uncertainty of this philosopher-poet of the late Vedic period about the origin of creation are not expressions of scepticism. He obviously had his vision, his insight, his understanding. But he also knew his limitations and he equally knew that celestial planes of existence were conditioned parts of the manifested cosmos just as this material world was, and therefore not even the inhabitants of those planes, the gods, could know the mystery of the beginning. So perhaps only he who is the highest one in the universe knows, but perhaps he does not, for was not the vision of the precreational situation (in verses one to three) without a personal creator? "That One breathed windless". And so even the highest god (later called *Brahma* and then mostly *Īśvara*) possibly belongs to this side of manifestation. The riddle of life is not to be resolved by speculation or by conventional religious ideas, but only by suprasensory and suprarational vision. That seems to be the implication of this hymn.

On the basis of this hymn we can also easily understand the later Buddhist and also Hindu attitude to the god *Brahma* as it is reflected in the Pāli Canon (particularly in the DN I, 1) and in the purāṇic cosmology. According to this view *Brahma* is born in the process of world manifestation and directs the creation and presides over the universe for one great world period at the end of which he dies and after a period of cosmic rest another *Brahma* is born and this is repeated in a ceaseless sequence of periods of world emanation from, and world withdrawal into, the transcendent.

This hymn is unique in the whole of the Vedas and that is why it has been so often quoted, but it would be wrong to assume that it represents an isolated case produced by a solitary thinker. Sporadic

utterances in other hymns show (e.g. RV 1, 164; 4, 23; 10, 2; 10, 82; 10, 90; 10, 120; 10, 121 and elsewhere) that the spirit of philosophical inquiry into the nature of the transcendent and the origin of experienced reality was considerably widespread, although, by its nature, not likely to be reflected in detail in the Vedic collections. But of course the Upaniṣadic philosophy and later philosophical systems, particularly *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta*, are in many respects elaborations of concepts and ideas scattered in the Vedic hymns and so superbly, albeit succinctly, expressed in the Creation hymn.

The early beginning of the conceptualisation of the Vedic spiritual message, whatever its reason, was what must have contributed to the loss of understanding of the archaic symbolical language and consequently of the deeper meaning of the Vedas. But it was still felt that there was real power behind the Vedas and this perpetuated the reverential attitude towards them and afforded them a permanent position of authority in the whole of Hindu tradition. The modern process of the conceptualisation of the symbolical language of the Vedas started with the philological work of early Indologists concerned with lexicographical tasks and problems of translation. It then continued in the form of attempts to interpret the Vedas and their world view and this was done according to hermeneutical principles derived from the nineteenth century which was positivistic and biased against non-Christian religions. This interpretation was inadequate and produced a very simplified or simplistic picture of the Vedic world view. It is therefore obvious that the process of conceptualisation of the Vedic message has not yet been completed and will have to be carried on, within the field of Indian studies, taking into account all the achievements of modern research into the field of religion and undertaking also the task of philosophical interpretation and analysis wherever applicable.

Abbreviations used in the text:

AV	= <i>Atharva Veda</i>
DN	= <i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
RV	= <i>Ṛg Veda</i>
YV - VS	= <i>Yajur Veda - Vājasaneyi Samhitā</i>

1. Non-being then existed not nor being:
 There was no air,* nor sky** that is beyond it.
 What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection?***
 And was there deep unfathomable water?
 * *rajas* - better: space (Grassmann's dictionary: dunkler Raum, der Luftraum)
 ** *vyoman* - better: heaven
 *** *śarman* - house, dwelling, shelter, protection

2. Death then existed not nor life immortal;
 Of neither night nor day was any token.
 By its inherent force the One* breathed windless:
 No other thing than that beyond existed.
 * *tad ekam* - literally: that one

3. Darkness there was at first by darkness hidden;
 Without distinctive marks, this all was water.
 That which, becoming, by the void was covered,
 That One by force of heat* came into being.
 * *tapas* - heat; to be interpreted as creative or mystical flame

4. Desire entered the One in the beginning:
 It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.*
 The sages searching in their hearts with wisdom,**
 Found out the bond of being in non-being.
 * *manaso retaḥ* - mind's seed
 ** *manīśa* - intelligence, understanding, wisdom

5. Their ray extended light across the darkness:
 But was the One above or was it under?
 Creative force was there, and fertile power:
 Below was energy, above was impulse.

6. Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it?
 Whence was it born, and whence came this creation?
 The gods were born after this world's creation:
 Then who can know from whence it has arisen?

7. None knoweth whence creation has arisen;
 And whether he has or has not produced it:
 He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
 He only knows, or haply he may know not.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Books

- CUPITT, Don, *The Leap of Reason*, Studies in Philosophy and Religion. — London, Sheldon Press, 1976, 145 p.
- DUPRÉ, Wilhelm, *Religion in Primitive Cultures*, a Study in Ethnophilosophy, Religion and Reason 9. — The Hague, Paris, 1975, 366 p.
- ELIADE, M., *Occultism. Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions*, Essays in Comparative Religion. — Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, 148 p.
- ELIADE, M., *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, I, De l'âge de la pierre aux mystères d'Eleusis. — Paris, Payot, 1976, 492 p.
- FAUST, Ulrich, *Mythologien und Religionen des Ostens bei Johann Gottfried Herder*. — Münster, Aschendorff, 1977, 252 p.
- GOLPEN, A. N., *The Religions of the People in Sixteenth-Century Champagne*, Harvard Historical Studies. — Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard University Press, 1976, 840 p.
- HERMAN, A. L., *The problem of Evil and the Indian Thought*. — Delhi, Motilal Banarsidan, 1976, 329 p.
- HINDUISM, *New Essays in the History of Religions*, edited by L. Smith. — Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976, 231 p.
- JACOBSON, Thorkild, *The Treasures of Darkness*, A. History of Mesopotamian Religion. — New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 273 p.
- KELLY, Henry, Ansgar, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII*. — Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1976, 333 p.

Journals

- Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 42, 21e année, juillet-décembre 1976.
- Monumenta Nipponica*, Volume XXX, Number 2, Summer 1975, Number 3, Autumn 1975, Number 4, Winter 1975; Volume XXXI, Number 1, Spring 1976, Number 2, Summer 1976, Number 3, Autumn 1976, Number 4, Winter 1976.
- Saeculum*, Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte, Band 25, Jahrgang 1974, Heft 4; Band 26, Jahrgang 1975, Heft 1, 2, 3, 4.
- Theologie der Gegenwart*, 20 Jg. 1977/1.
- Theologische Zeitschrift* herausgegeben von der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Basel, Jahrgang 31, Heft 3, 5; Jahrgang 32, Heft 1, 2, 3, 4; Jahrgang 33, Heft 1.